NARUTO

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

8

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

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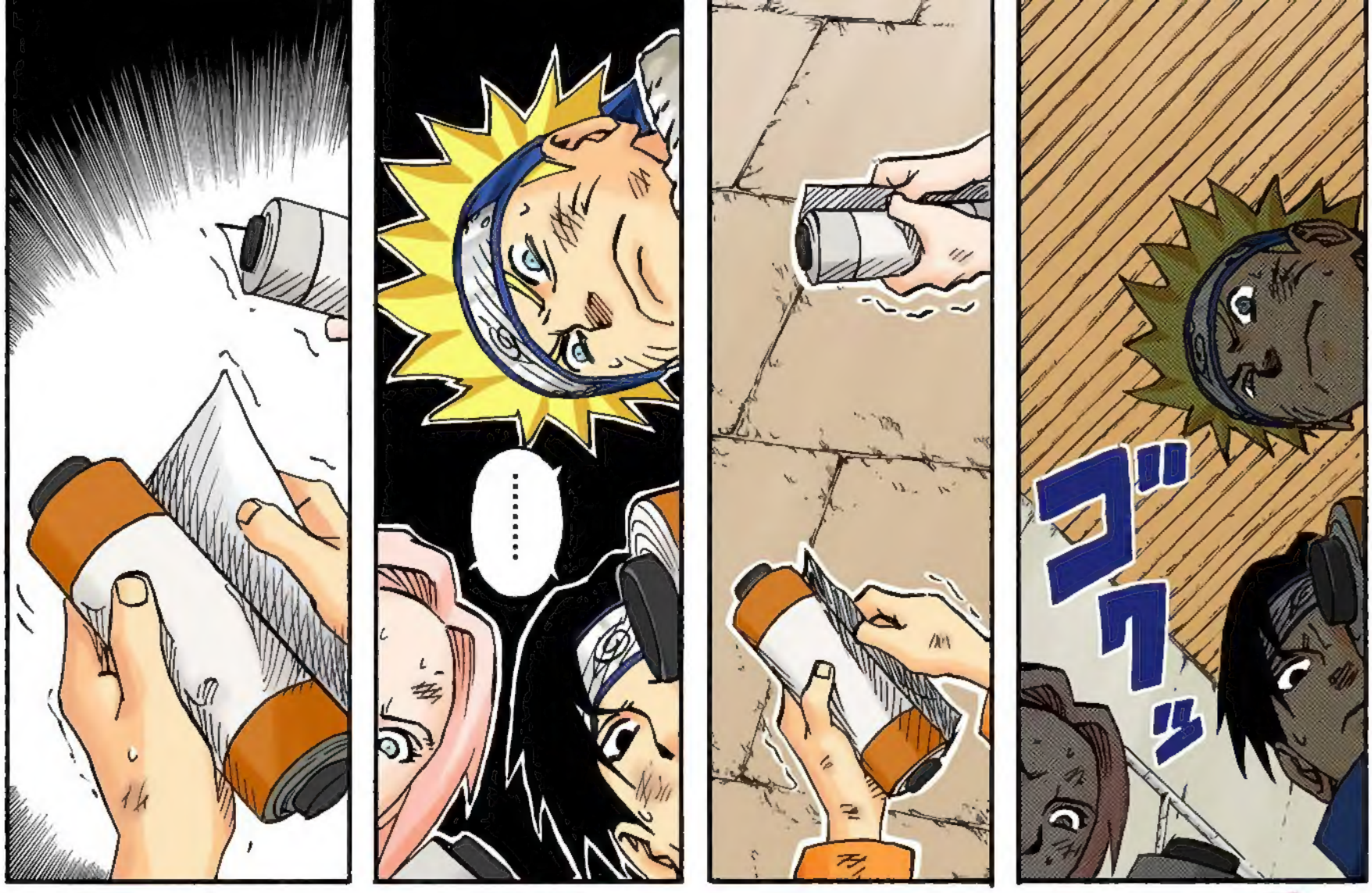

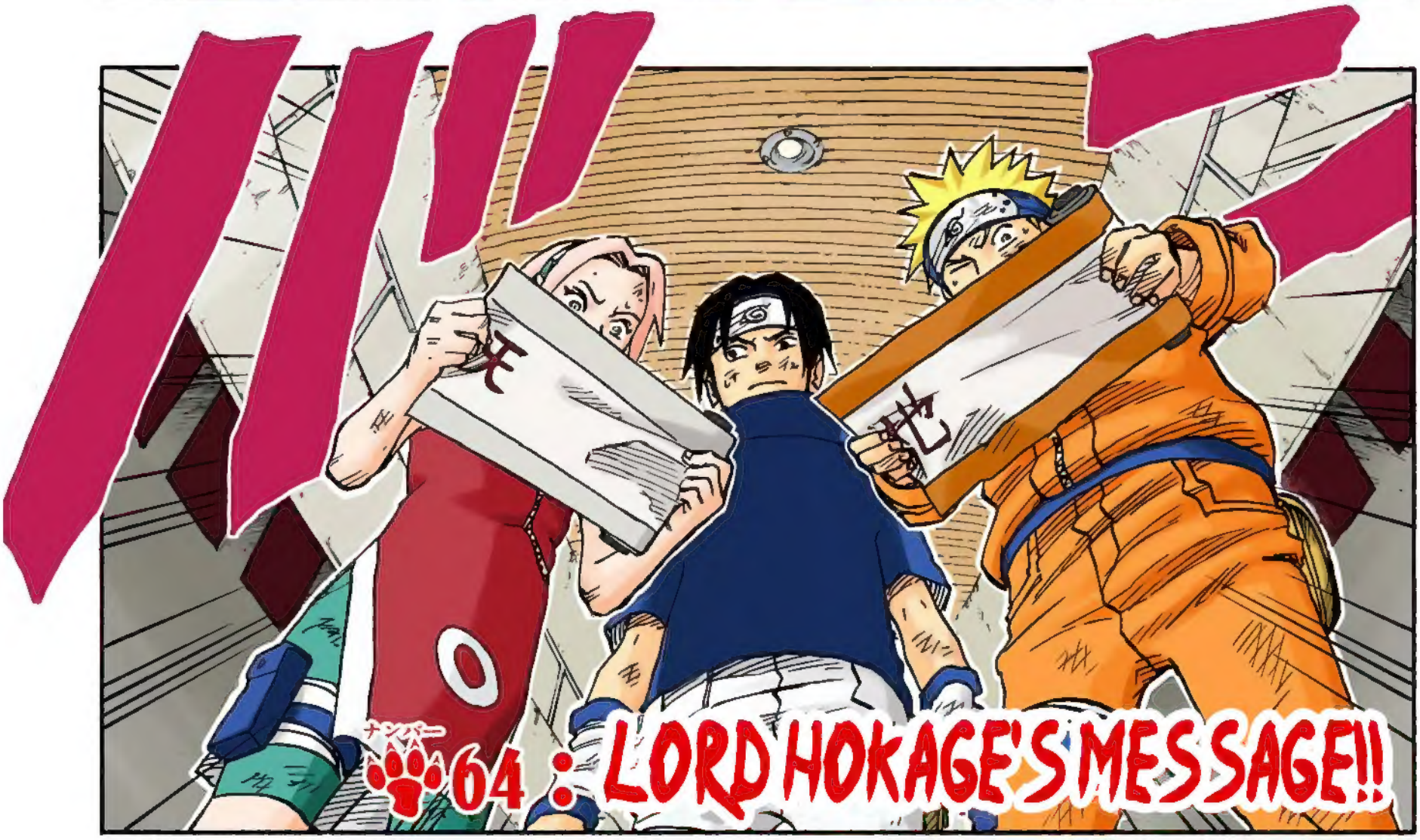

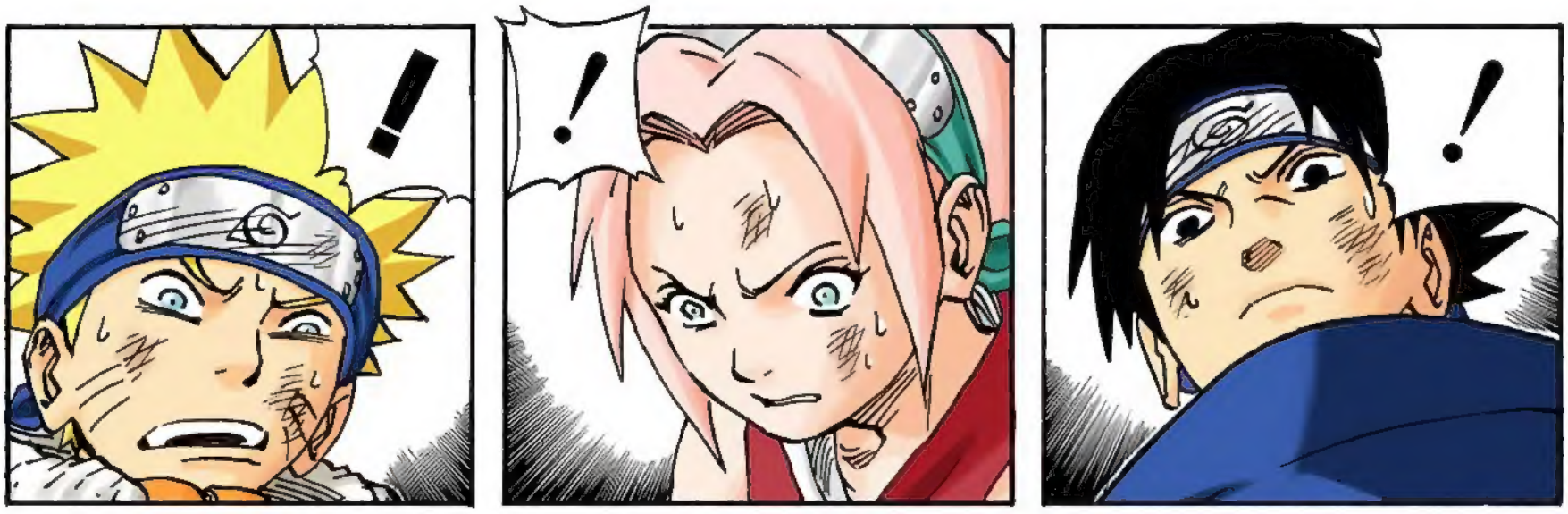

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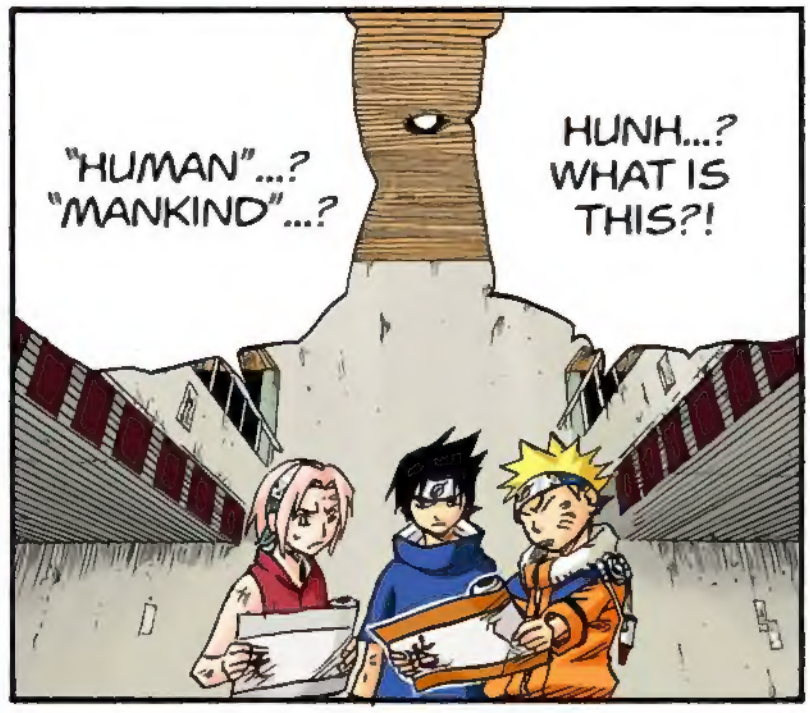
LORD HOKAGE'S MESSAGE!!



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NARUTO! SAKURA! DROP THE SCROLLS!! NOW!

...A SPELL OF SUMMONING!!

THIS IS...

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!!?

Y-YOU'RE...?!

!

.....!?

HUNH?

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HEY, KIDS...!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, EH?

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YOU THREE LOOK LIKE YOU'VE REALLY BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND!!

.....

?

?

PATA

MASTER IRUKA... WHAT ARE YOU DOING, POPPING UP OUT OF A SUMMONING SPELL?!

HUNH?! HUNH?!!

IT WAS JUST GOOD LUCK THAT I GOT TO BE THE MESSENGER FOR THE THREE OF YOU.

THE SPELL WAS DESIGNED SO THAT WE CHÛNIN COULD GREET THE APPLICANTS AT THE END OF THE SECOND EXAM.

MESSENGER...?!

POK

POP

YOU BARELY MADE IT!

YEAH...

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YOU'VE ALL PASSED THE SECOND EXAM.

CONGRATULATIONS...

HM?

LEAP

I WISH I COULD TAKE YOU OUT FOR RAMEN AT ICHIRAKU...

THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION!

おっとと…

YESSS!!!

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YES!!

YES!
YES!
YES!

H-HEY!
NARUTO!

LET
ME
FINISH...

I'M
SO
HAPPY!!

YAYYY!!!

SHUT
UP!

20

HE KEEPS
GOING...
AND
GOING...

ドス

->SIGH<-

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YOU HAVEN'T SLOWED DOWN A BIT...

...EH, NARUTO?

!

イエーイ

...EXACTLY.

HMPH...

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE, MASTER IRUKA?!

?

IF WE HAD SNEAKED A PEEK AT THE SCROLLS BEFORE THE EXAM WAS OVER..

?

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SO IF WE HAD TRIED TO READ THEM TOO SOON...?!

.....

SASUKE, YOU'RE AS SHARP AS EVER.

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AND YOU WERE SPECIFICALLY INSTRUCTED NOT TO OPEN THE SCROLLS UNTIL YOU GOT HERE.

AS YOU SEEM TO HAVE GUESSED...

...AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THIS EXAM WAS THAT YOU DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO REMAIN WITHIN A MISSION'S STATED PARAMETERS.

...WAS TO BE KNOCKED OUT UNTIL AFTER THE SECOND EXAM WAS OVER.

...OUR ORDERS WERE VERY SPECIFIC. ANYONE STANDING AROUND AN OPEN SCROLL...

INNER SAKURA

PHEW... WE WERE SO CLOSE TO DISASTER!

I OWE YOU ONE!!!

K-KABUTO!!!

!!

HEH...

NOW AREN'T YOU TWO GLAD YOU DIDN'T OPEN IT?

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...IT LOOKS LIKE MOTHS HAVE BEEN AT IT!

AND WE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT IT MEANS!

!

OH, RIGHT! MASTER IRUKA!!

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE WALL SCROLL?

IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE... WE PASSED!!

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SO? WHO CARES ...?!

IT'S THE DIRECTIVE SET DOWN BY THE THIRD LORD HOKAGE FOR ALL CHÛNIN JOURNEYMAN NINJA.

READ IT AGAIN.

WRONG...!

PART OF WHY I'M HERE IS TO MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE MESSAGE OF THE SCROLL, SO...

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THAT'S RIGHT! IN THE TEXT, THE WORD "HEAVEN" REFERS TO THE HUMAN MIND...

...AND "EARTH" REFERS TO THE HUMAN BODY.

HMMM...

"DIRECTIVE"...?!

IF NARUTO'S WEAKEST AREA IS HIS BRAIN AND ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE...

JAB

"IF QUALITIES OF HEAVEN ARE YOUR DESIRE, ACQUIRE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE TO TAKE YOUR MIND HIGHER."

IN OTHER WORDS...

...SHE NEEDS TO TRAIN HARD AND FIND THE RICHES OF PHYSICAL STAMINA AND SKILL.

IF SAKURA'S WEAK POINT IS WITH HER LACK OF STRENGTH AND POWER..

HEH HEH...

AND...

"IF EARTHLY QUALITIES ARE WHAT YOU LACK, TRAIN YOUR BODY IN THE FIELDS AND PREPARE TO ATTACK."

...HE'S GOT TO STUDY HARD AND LEARN THE PRINCIPLES THAT WILL HELP HIM ON HIS MISSIONS.

GET OUTTA MY FACE!

UR...

HEE HEE!

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...NO MISSION, HOWEVER DANGEROUS, WILL BE A WRONG PATH FOR YOU.

AND ONCE YOU ACCESS THE QUALITIES OF BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH...

WHAT ABOUT THAT BLANK SPACE? WHAT GOES THERE...?

THEN...

...YOU'LL BE WALKING A SAFE PATH, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST PERILOUS MISSION... THAT'S IT!

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THE WORD THAT GOES THERE IS A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT A CHÛNIN SHOULD BE.

THE SINGLE CHARACTER THAT BELONGS IN THE BLANK SPACE IS THE ONE FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE SCROLLS. IT'S "JIN," MEANING ONE PERSON OR ALL PEOPLE.

This " " is the

...that guides

place

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YOU ALL PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS.

THE CHALLENGE OF SEEING WHO SURVIVED THESE PAST FIVE DAYS WAS A PART OF THE EXAM DESIGNED TO TEST THE APPLICANTS' BASIC CHÛNIN ABILITIES.

THEY CAN ONLY DO SO BY A COMBINATION OF INTELLIGENCE AND STRENGTH. I CAN'T EMPHASIZE IT ENOUGH. LEARN IT... LIVE IT. BELIEVE IT FROM THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART!!

CHÛNIN ARE THE UNIT COMMANDER CLASS... RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING THEIR TEAMS.

KEEP THE CHÛNIN DIRECTIVE FOREMOST IN YOUR MIND AS YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT EXAM.

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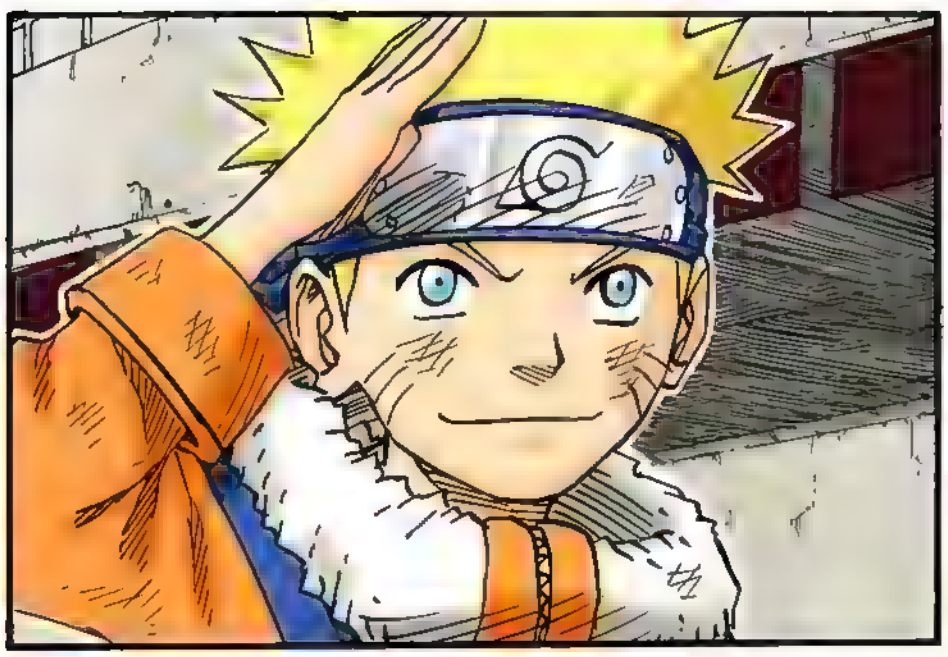
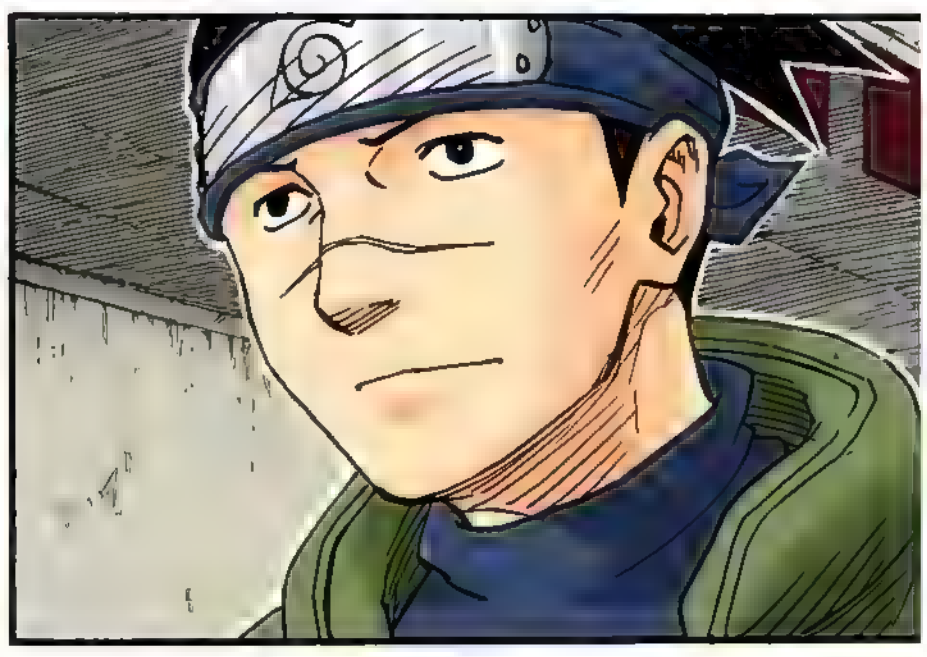
YES, SIR!!

THAT'S THE ENTIRE MESSAGE!!

THAT'S IT...





...BUT ...ABOUT THE THIRD EXAM...

DON'T OVERDO THINGS.

NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT ME!!

I STOPPED BEING A STUDENT!!

THE DAY I GOT THE KONOHA GRADUATION HEADBAND...

ESPECIALLY YOU, NARUTO... I WORRY ABOUT YOU.

MY TEMPER HASN'T CHANGED ANY, AND MAYBE I'M IMPULSIVE AND FULL OF ENERGY...

...BUT I'M NOT A KID!!

IT'S PROOF OF MY MATURITY... AND I GOT IT FROM YOU, MASTER IRUKA!!

I'M...

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...A FULL-FLEDGED SHINOBI! YOU GOT THAT?!

.....

...I SEE...

...MY APOLOGIES, NARUTO...

IF THERE'S NO WAY THEY CAN PASS... AT LEAST LET ME BE THE ONE WHO BREAKS THE NEWS TO THEM.

I KNOW WHAT THESE KIDS ARE CAPABLE OF.

.....

IF IT MEANS THAT MUCH TO YOU, IRUKA, THEN THEY'RE ALL YOURS...

...BUT WHY SUBJECT YOURSELF TO BEING THE BEARER OF BAD NEWS?

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THIS IS THE GROUP THAT KAKASHI'S BEEN TRAINING, RIGHT?

IF HE'S GOT FAITH IN THEM, THEN... I WOULDN'T COUNT THEM OUT JUST YET.

STILL...

I REALLY APPRECIATE IT!

THEY ARE SOLDIERS UNDER MY COMMAND.

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, ANYWAY... THEY'RE NOT YOUR STUDENTS ANYMORE.

...WHO UNDER-STANDS JUST WHAT THESE, KIDS CAN HANDLE.

WELL, KAKASHI... IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S YOU AND NOT ME...

HEH HEH...

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OOH...

DOES THE MARK OF THE CURSE STILL HURT?

...SO WHY DID HE CHOOSE NOW, OF ALL TIMES, TO REAPPEAR?

HE'S A BINGO BOOK S-CLASS RENEGADE THAT EVEN THE BLACK OPS NINJA COULDN'T HANDLE, RIGHT? I'D EVEN HEARD HE WAS KILLED SOME TIME AGO...

MEAN-WHILE...

THIS OROCHIMARU IS ONE OF THE "THREE GREAT SHINOBI" OF KONOHA LEGEND, IS HE NOT?

...THANKS TO YOU, MY LORD.

MUCH LESS...

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I THINK WE CAN ASSUME HE HAS COME FOR SASUKE.

PROB-ABLY HE--

THERE'S A CHILD I WANT, YOU SEE...

FOR HIS BLOODLINE IS THAT OF THE UCHIHA CLAN...

BEEEP

LADY ANKO!!

HUNH?!

...WHILE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON OROCHIMARU'S MOVEMENTS, OF COURSE.

...IN ANY CASE, WE'LL PROCEED WITH THE EXAMINATIONS AS PLANNED...

YES, SIR!

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BY-LAWS GOVERNING CHÛNIN EXAMS, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE YEARS WE'LL BE SCHEDULING PRELIMINARY ROUNDS FOR THE THIRD EXAMINATION.

IT'S CONFIRMED, MA'AM. SEVEN TEAMS HAVE PASSED THE SECOND EXAM... THAT'S 21 APPLICANTS.

THE SECOND EXAMINATION IS OFFICIALLY OVER.

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It's been about 2 years since ***Naruto*** began running in ***Weekly Shonen Jump***... and I haven't been back to my parents' house once! While I've been away from home, they've totally remodeled the place, and apparently there's not even a trace left of my shabby, memory-filled room. When I heard that, I got a little sad... Time just keeps flowing by...

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2001

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

CONGRAT-ULATIONS TO YOU ALL...

...ON PASSING THE SECOND EXAM!!

ナンバー

65 : LIFE AND DEATH BATTLES!!

I SAID I WOULD PARE THEIR NUMBERS DOWN TO LESS THAN HALF, BUT REALLY I WAS ONLY EXPECTING A SINGLE DIGIT FIGURE...

HEH... WE STARTED WITH 78 APPLICANTS... IT'S AMAZING THAT 21 OF THEM ACTUALLY MADE IT.

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ナンバー

65：

LIFE AND DEATH BATTLES!!

SASUKE'S TEAM MADE IT!

♡

I'M FAMISHED!

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STILL SO MANY COMPETITORS... WHAT A PAIN!

YOUR STUDENTS MADE AN IMPRESSIVE SHOWING! I WONDER HOW MUCH OF IT WAS DUMB LUCK...

...NOT THAT IT MATTERS. MY TEAM IS BOUND TO KNOCK THEM OUT IN THE NEXT ROUND.

YOU ALWAYS DID TRY TO GET UNDER MY SKIN WITH YOUR ALOOF ACT.

HEH... GOOD ONE... AS ANNOYING AS EVER, KAKASHI...

?

!

I'M SORRY... DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?

HUH?

WHAT?!

AH, WELL... SOME-TIMES BEING YOUNG IS ALL ABOUT LEARNING TO DEAL WITH HEART-BREAK, EH, KAKASHI?

AT THE NEXT LEVEL, IT WILL BE ALL ABOUT THEIR ABILITIES... OR LACK THEREOF.

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HE'S THE MAN!

NONE OF THE OTHER TEACHERS ARE AS COOL AS MASTER GUY. NOT EVEN CLOSE!!

MAN, HE BEATS MASTER GUY HANDS DOWN IN THE LOOKS DEPARTMENT...

WOW, SO THAT'S MASTER GUY'S ARCHRIVAL...

SO NOW ONLY THE REAL PLAYERS ARE LEFT.

AND UCHIHA SASUKE MADE IT, EH...?

JUST WAIT, MASTER GUY! I'LL MAKE YOU PROUD!!

YOU'LL PAY FOR INJURING MY ARMS, UCHIHA SASUKE...

.....

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AMAZING... THERE WERE 26 THREE-MAN TEAMS AT THE START, AND ONLY SEVEN TEAMS FINISHED.

AKAMARU'S ACTING STRANGE..

SO YOU CAME THROUGH WITHOUT A SCRATCH AFTER ALL, GAARA...

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NARUTO PASSED, TOO... I'M SO GLAD! YAY!

THOSE GUYS FROM THE SAND VILLAGE...

-)WHINE(-

IT'S LIKE A DREAM TEAM!

OLD MAN HOKAGE, MASTER IRUKA, MASTER KAKASHI, AND EVEN THAT MEGA-BROWS GUY ARE ALL GATHERED TOGETHER!

HEY! CHECK IT OUT!

WHAT THE...?! ALL OF THE APPLICANTS FROM KONOHA ARE HERE!

AND EVEN MORE ASTOUNDING THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE SURVIVORS WERE CULLED FROM THE RANKS OF THE MOST RAW RECRUITS.

IT'S ASTONISHING THAT SO MANY OF THEM SURVIVED...

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I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...

HMM...

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LISTEN UP AND TAKE EVERY WORD HE SAYS TO HEART!!

NOW LORD HOKAGE HIMSELF WILL EXPLAIN ABOUT THE THIRD EXAM.

NO WONDER THEIR INSTRUCTORS VIED FOR THE RIGHT TO RECOMMEND THEM FOR THIS COMPETITION...

VERY WELL.

THEY'RE ALL YOURS, MY LORD.

IT PERTAINS TO THE UNDERLYING PURPOSE OF THE EXAM.

...LET ME MAKE ONE THING PERFECTLY CLEAR!!!

THE THIRD EXAMINATION IS ABOUT TO COMMENCE... BUT BEFORE I GO INTO THE SPECIFICS OF HOW IT WILL BE CONDUCTED...

!!?

?

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!?

WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE AN EXAMINATION OF THIS NATURE IS BEING JOINTLY CONDUCTED BY ALL OF THE NATIONS IN OUR MUTUAL ALLIANCE?!

...TH... THE PUR- POSE... ?!

!!?

THIS SERIES OF SO-CALLED EXAMINATIONS IS, IN FACT...

"TO PROMOTE FRIENDSHIP AMONG ALLIED NATIONS AND RAISE THE LEVEL AND STANDARDS IN THE ART OF THE SHINOBI..."

BE VERY CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THOSE FINE-SOUNDING PHRASES ACTUALLY MEAN!

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"...SO- CALLED..."?

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...A WAR-IN-MINIATURE BETWEEN ALL OF OUR ALLIED LANDS.

...A TEMPORARY AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN A GROUP OF GEOGRAPHICALLY CONTIGUOUS LANDS...

IF YOU WERE TO STUDY OUR RECENT HISTORY-- AND CONSULT A MAP-- IT WOULD SWIFTLY BECOME APPARENT THAT OUR ALLIANCE IS, IN FACT...

WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

!?

I THOUGHT THE POINT WAS TO SELECT CHÛNIN!

THAT'S THE STUPIDEST THING I EVER HEARD!

...UNTIL A BETTER WAY WAS DEVISED.. THE WAY OF THE CHÛNIN JOURNEYMAN NINJA SELECTION EXAMINATION...!

...WHOSE PREVIOUS EXISTENCE WAS ONE OF CONTINUAL STRIFE... CONSTANTLY JOCKEYING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, OPENLY AND IN SECRET, FOR POWER AND THE CONTROL OF RESOURCES THAT WERE PERPETUALLY DEPLETED ALMOST TO EXHAUSTION IN THE STRUGGLE...

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...IT SERVES AS AN ARENA WHEREIN, FOR THE HONOR OF THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMELANDS...

...YOUNG SHINOBI MAY FIGHT... TO THE DEATH, IF NEED BE!

MAKE NO MISTAKE. WHEN THIS EXAM IS DONE, IT WILL HAVE HAD THE SIDE EFFECT...

...OF WINNOWING OUT ANY APPLICANTS UNFIT TO ASCEND TO THE LEVEL OF CHÛNIN. BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY...

THEY WILL BE WATCHING YOU.

AND AMONG THEIR NUMBER WILL BE THOSE WHO RULE OVER EACH COUNTRY'S OWN HIDDEN NINJA VILLAGES.

THIS THIRD EXAMINATION WILL BE CONDUCTED UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF A NUMBER OF DISTINGUISHED GUESTS...

...INCLUDING THE RULERS AND NOBILITY OF THE VARIOUS LANDS YOU ALL ASPIRE TO SERVE.

THE HONOR OF THEIR LANDS...?!

.....

CONVERSELY, IF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY'S APPLICANTS ARE SHOWN TO BE INCOMPETENT OR FEEBLE...

...COMMISSIONS TO AGENTS OF THAT COUNTRY WILL DWINDLE.

IF ANY ONE NATION'S APPLICANTS DEMONSTRATE OUTSTANDING SKILL AND SUPERIORITY...

...THE NOBLEMEN FROM EVERY LAND WILL BE QUICK TO COMMISSION WORK FROM THOSE TRAINED IN THAT SUPERIOR NATION.

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WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO STAKE OUR LIVES AND FIGHT...?!

SO?!

...THEN THAT VILLAGE MAY SAY TO ITS NEIGHBORS, "BEWARE, FOR WE POSSESS PROWESS AND RICHES AND THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL POWER"!

AND WHEN ONE LAND IS STRONG IN BATTLE...

...AND THE VILLAGE COFFERS OVERFLOW WITH THE FRUITS OF THE MANY OUTSIDE COMMISSIONS THIS BEGETS...

...AND THE VILLAGE DRAWS STRENGTH FROM THE SHINOBI WHO LIVE THERE...

THE STRENGTH OF A COUNTRY IS DERIVED FROM THE STRENGTH OF ITS VILLAGE...

.....

...ONLY EMERGES IN THE MIDST OF A DESPERATE LIFE-AND-DEATH BATTLE!

...AND THE GREATEST STRENGTH OF THOSE SHINOBI...

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AS YOU STRUGGLE FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR VERY LIVES AND YOUR PEOPLE, YOU HELP TO FULFILL THE DREAM THAT WAS ENVISIONED BY OUR ANCESTORS.

THIS TEST HAS MEANING AND GREAT CONSEQUENCE.

...AND HENCE THE STRENGTH OF THE COUNTRY ITSELF!

THESE EXAMS PROVIDE A PUBLIC ARENA FOR EACH COUNTRY TO SHOW OFF AND BOAST OF THE STRENGTH OF ITS WARRIORS...

TO PRESERVE THE BALANCE OF POWER AT THE RISK OF LIVES...

...IS THE ESSENCE OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE WORLD OF SHINOBI.

THOUGH MY MEANING IS SUBTLE, I CHOSE MY WORDS WITH CARE.

...YOU'VE ALWAYS EMPHASIZED THE CONCEPT OF "FRIENDSHIP" ... WHY?!

BUT...

YOU ARE TAKING NO ORDINARY TEST!

LET ME REITERATE BEFORE THE THIRD EXAM BEGINS...

.....

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...BUT THE DIGNITY AND PRESTIGE OF YOUR HOME VILLAGE AS WELL.

YOU RISK NOT ONLY YOUR OWN FUTURES AND YOUR DREAMS...

NOW I GET IT!

.....

WELL... THE TRUTH IS...

?

SO, YOU INSIST I EXPLAIN THE THIRD EXAM?

HMPH!

COULD YOU WRAP UP THE PHILOSOPHICAL TALK AND GET DOWN TO THE LIFE-AND-DEATH STUFF ANY TIME SOON?

WHATEVER..

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...FORGIVE MY INTERRUPTION, LORD HOKAGE, BUT...

IF YOU DON'T MIND HANDING THE REST OF THE PROCEEDINGS OVER...

...TO ME, GEKKO HAYATE, PROCTOR OF THE THIRD EXAM.

GOOD TO MEET YOU, EVERYONE... I'M HAYATE.

TSK..

.....

GO AHEAD.

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UHHH... BEFORE WE START THE EXAM...

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...I MUST ASK YOU ALL TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME...

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THIS GUY SEEMS KIND OF SICKLY... I WONDER IF HE'S ALL RIGHT...

WHAT THE...?

!!?

PRELIMINARIES?!

UMMM... YOU SEE... THERE ARE SOME PRELIMINARIES TO THE EXAM PROPER..

...AND WHETHER YOU PROCEED TO THE MAIN EXAM IS CONTINGENT ON HOW WELL YOU MANAGE THOSE.

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WHY CAN'T ALL OF THE REMAINING APPLICANTS JUST PROCEED DIRECTLY TO THE NEXT EXAM?

MASTER HAYATE... I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN BY PRELIMINARIES.

LIKE WHAT?!

PRELIM-INARIES ...?

...WE STILL HAVE TOO MANY APPLICANTS.

ゴゥ

WELL... I DON'T WANT TO SAY THAT THE FIRST TWO EXAMS WEREN'T DEMANDING ENOUGH... BUT THE TRUTH IS...

AS LORD HOKAGE MENTIONED, A NUMBER OF HONORED GUESTS WILL BE OBSERVING YOU DURING THE THIRD EXAM...

...SO WE MUST MAKE THE EXAM INTENSE, TIGHT, AND FAST-MOVING.

...TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS WHO'LL PROCEED TO THE THIRD EXAM.

UNDER THE TRADITIONAL RULES OF THE EXAM, WE HAVE TO HAVE A PRELIMINARY TEST...

B-BUT...

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HMMM... SO ANYWAY... NOW THAT YOU KNOW SOMETHING OF WHAT IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT...

...ANYONE WHO DOESN'T FEEL UP TO THE CHALLENGE, EITHER PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY, CAN WALK AWAY. JUST TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD...

BECAUSE THE PRELIMINARIES START... RIGHT NOW!

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NOW?!

.....

THAT KABUTO GUY AND I MADE A PACT... SO I'LL DEFINITELY GIVE THIS TEST MY BEST!

ALL RIGHT!!

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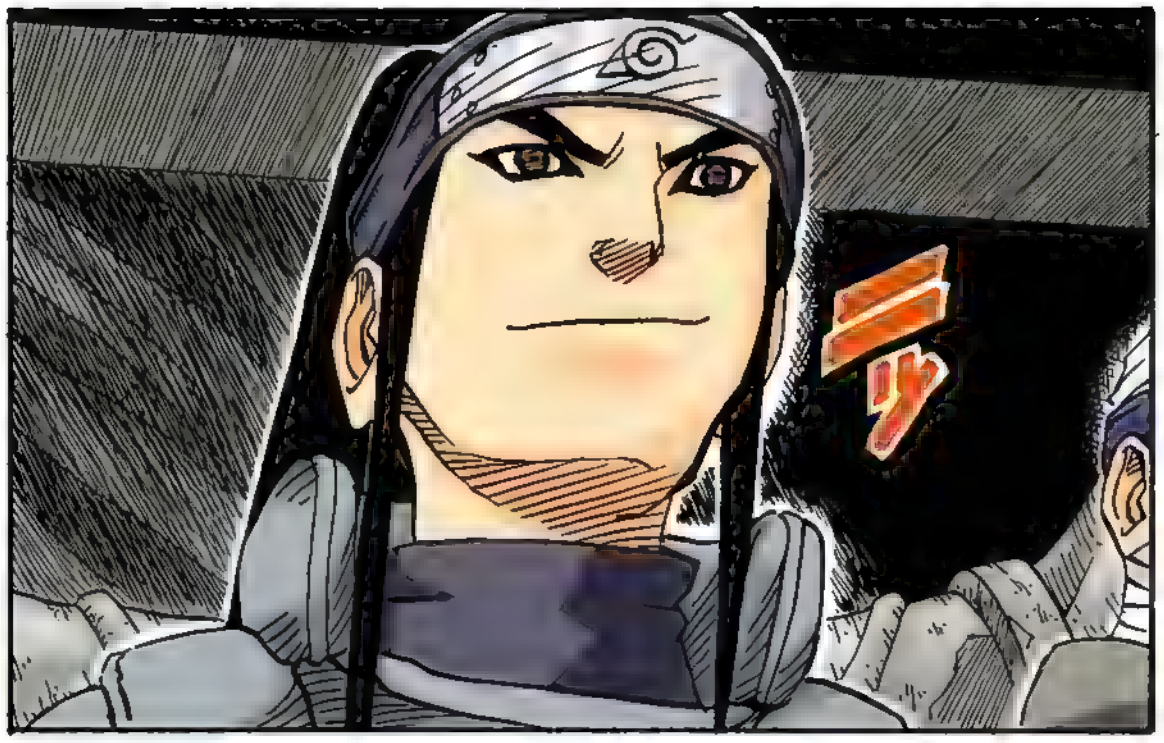

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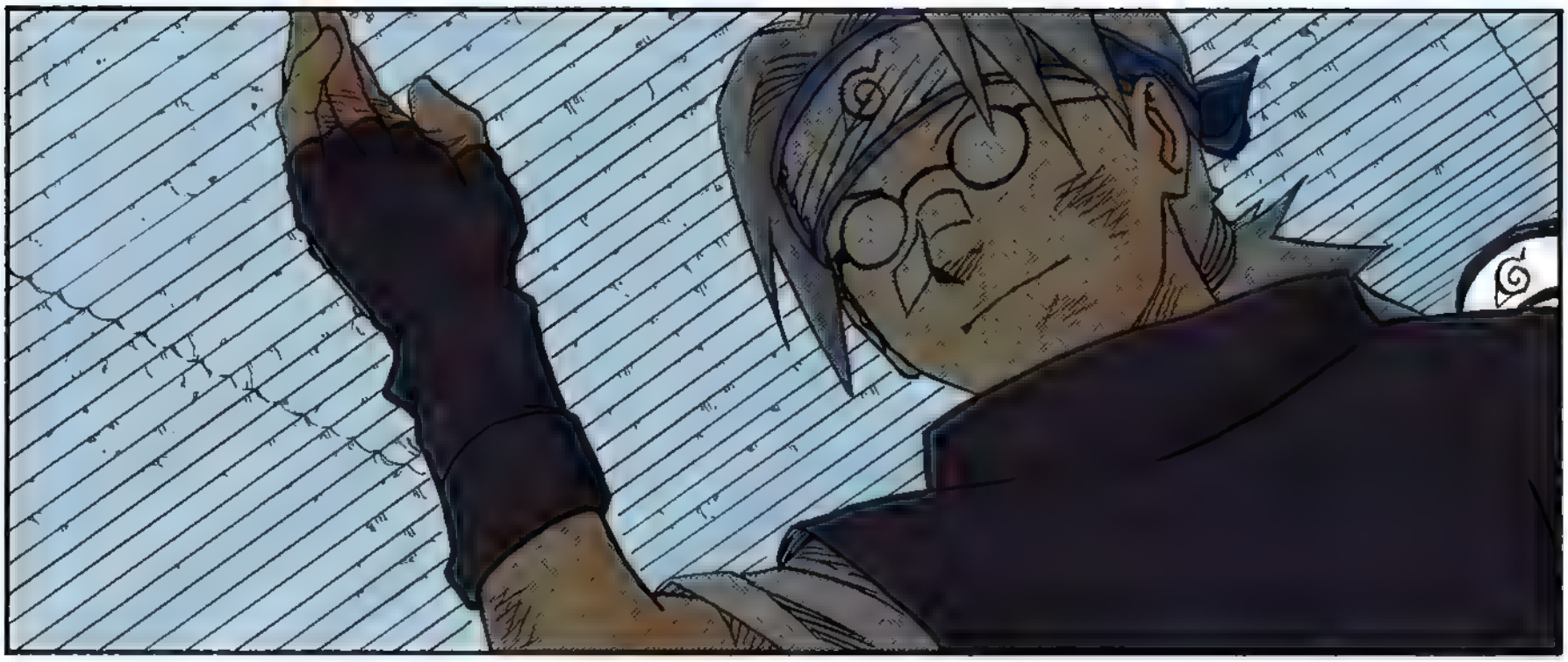
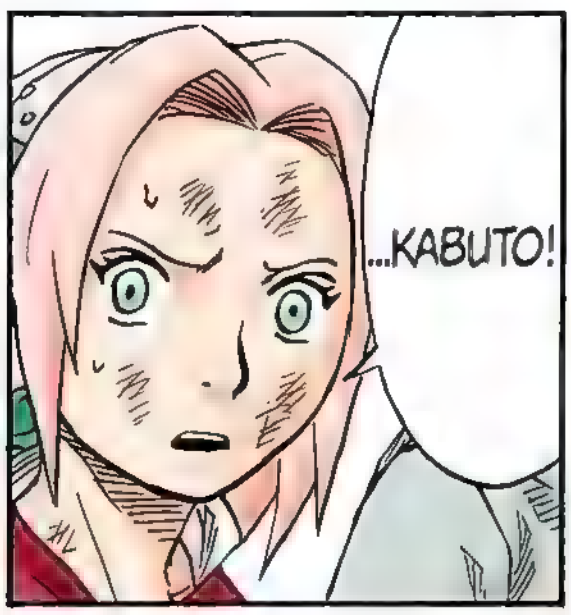
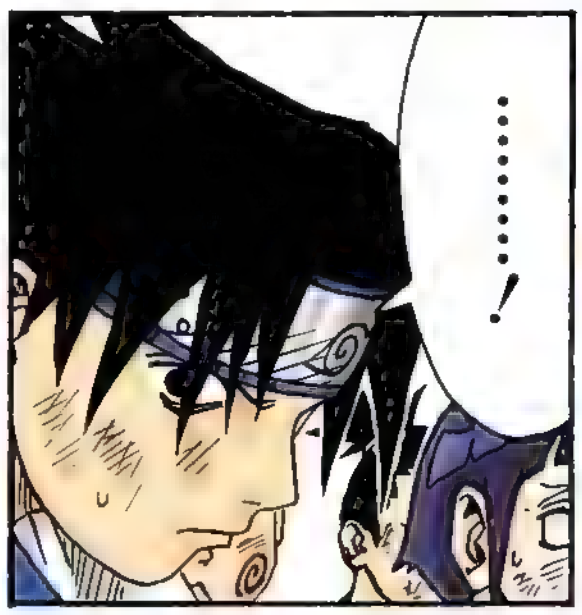
ナンバー66：SAKURA'S ADVICE







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AREN'T YOU... YAKUSHI KABUTO OF KONOHA...?

OKAY. YOU CAN GO.

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UMMM...

...NOT AS MEMBERS OF TEAMS. SO YOU CAN MAKE THE DECISION THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT ANYONE ELSE.

SO... ANYONE ELSE WANT OUT? SHOW OF HANDS...?

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UHHH... IN CASE I FORGOT TO MENTION IT, FROM HERE ON IN, YOU FIGHT AS INDIVIDUALS...

.....!!

.....

.....!

HEY! KABUTO!! WHAT'S UP WITH YOU QUITTING?!

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.....

.....

NOW THEY'RE SAYING THIS COULD BE A FIGHT TO THE DEATH... AND I JUST DON'T THINK I'M UP TO THAT!

NARUTO... I'M SORRY... BUT THOSE GUYS WE FOUGHT BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF ME.

AND EVER SINCE MY SCUFFLE WITH THOSE SOUND NINJA PRIOR TO THE FIRST EXAM, I'VE BEEN TOTALLY DEAF IN MY LEFT EAR.

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WHAT SORT OF RECORD HAS HE GOT?

I WONDER... WHAT ON EARTH COULD HE BE THINKING?

IF MEMORY SERVES ME, THIS IS ABOUT THE SAME POINT AT WHICH HE DROPPED OUT LAST TIME...

...WELL, THERE'S A FAMILIAR FACE, EH?

...HE'S TRIED AND FAILED SIX TIMES NOW.

YAKUSHI KABUTO... ACCORD-ING TO HIS DOSSIER...

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ORDINARY... UNREMARKABLE. IN HIS ACADEMY DAYS, HE WAS AN AVERAGE STUDENT, EARNING MEDIOCRE GRADES...

IT TOOK HIM THREE ATTEMPTS TO PASS HIS FINALS AND GRADUATE.

SINCE THEN, HE'S COMPLETED TWO C-RANKED AND 14 D-RANKED MISSIONS.

THERE'S NOTHING NOTEWORTHY IN THE RECORDS OF ANY OF HIS BATTLES...

EXCEPT...?

...EXCEPT FOR SOME-THING THAT HAPPENED BEFORE HE EVEN ENTERED THE ACADEMY.

...EXCEPT...

DO YOU REMEMBER HEARING THE TALE...

...OF A YOUNG BOY WHO WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM THAT BATTLE AT KIKYO PASS?

I DO... YES...

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, THE STORY WAS THAT A JÔNIN ELITE NINJA OF THE MEDICAL CORPS...

...TOOK IN AN ENEMY YOUTH WHO HAD SURVIVED ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

AND HE'S THAT CHILD...?

COLORED MANGA.COM

...NARUTO, SASUKE... I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HANG OUT WITH YOU A WHILE LONGER...

...BUT IF I KEEP GOING...

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU, "JUST LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME"...

YOU SEEM VERY DEDICATED.

ワイ

...MY OLD BLOOD MIGHT START BUBBLING UP...

HEH.....

IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE...

BESIDES, THIS IS PERFECT.

FUN'S FUN, BUT TECHNICALLY I'M A SPY HERE...

AND NOW IS HARDLY THE TIME TO BLOW MY COVER.

COLORED MANGA.COM

...LORD OROCHIMARU!

...THEN I CAN HAND OFF THE INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING WORK TO YOU...

...HAS IT BECOME TOO MUCH FOR YOU? ARE YOU READY TO SNAP? IS YOUR ROILING BLOOD ACHING TO FLOW FREE?

GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN LORD OROCHIMARU'S ORDERS?

THE STRAIN OF ALWAYS HOLDING IN YOUR TRUE SELF...

AS MY UNDERCOVER AGENT, YOU'VE HAD TO WEAR THE MASK OF A FALSE LIFE SINCE YOU WERE A MERE CHILD.

CONSIDERING HOW YOU RESENT MY RECENT PROMOTION, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D JUMP AT THE CHANCE.

IT'S THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR A REAL SHOW OF SHEER BRUTE STRENGTH!

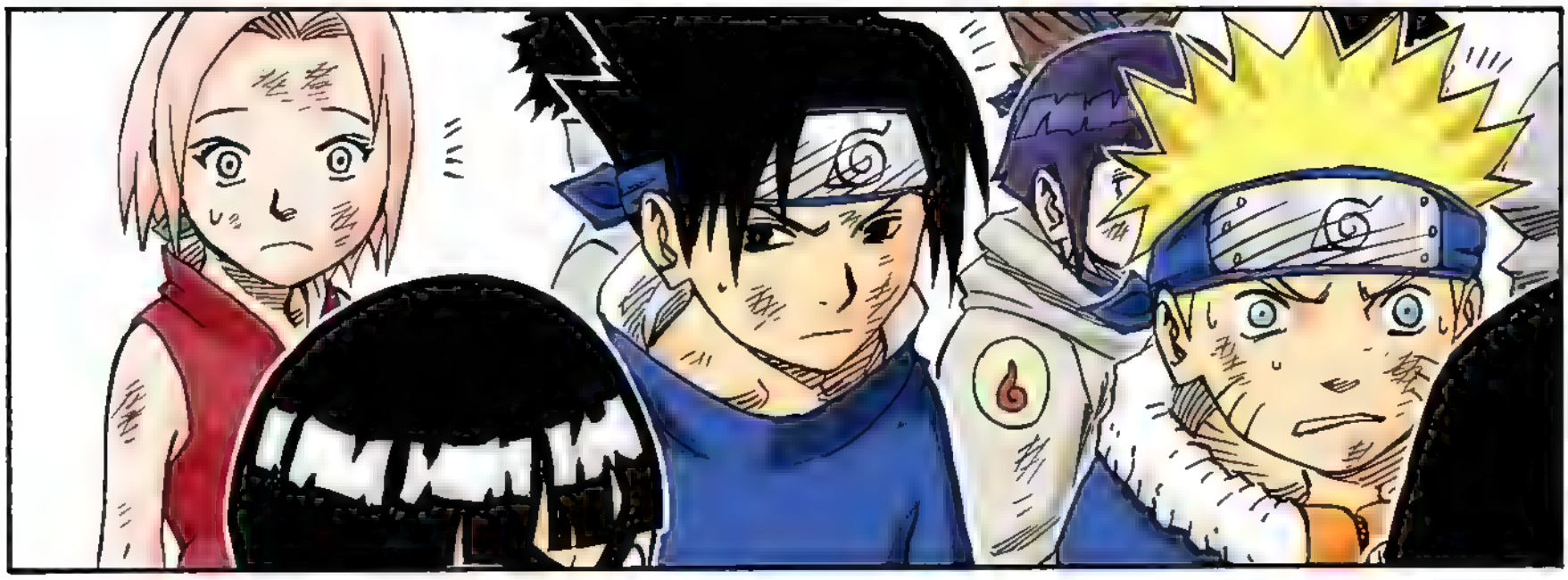
HMPH... YOU MAY THINK YOU'RE LORD OROCHIMARU'S FAVORITE... BUT DON'T PUSH IT, BRAT.

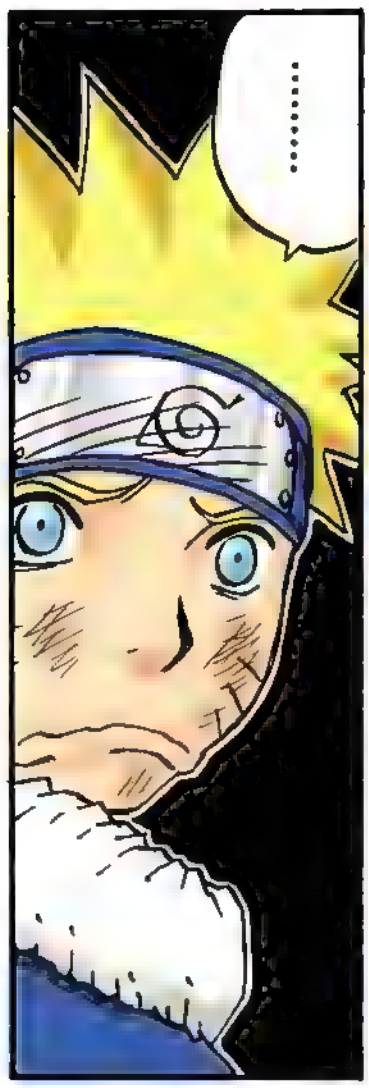
.....

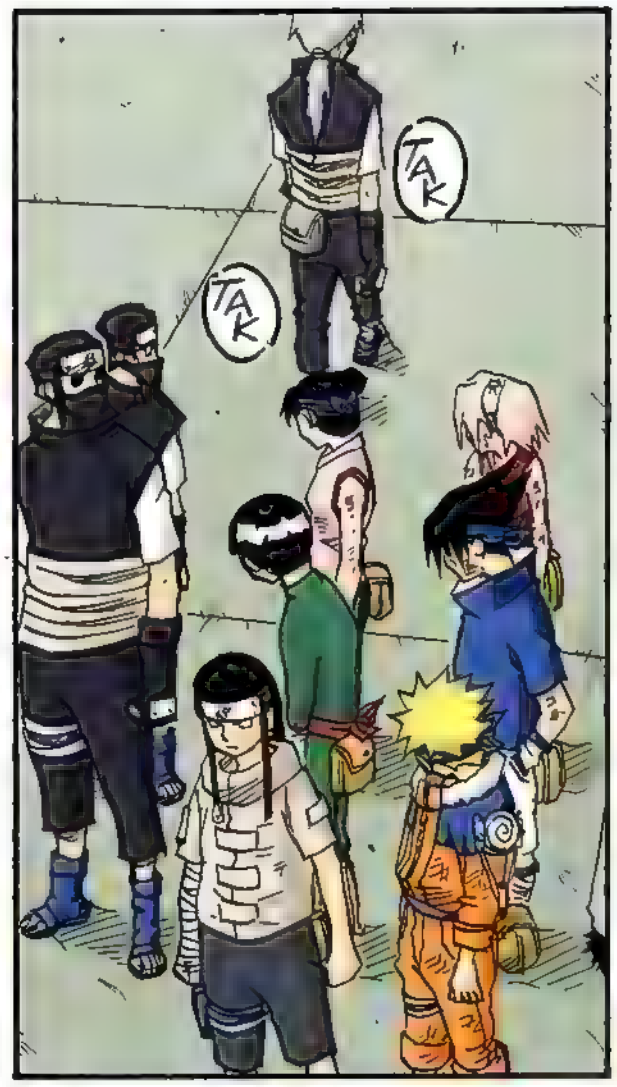
ESPECIALLY YOU, YOROI... WITH YOUR ABILITIES, THIS NEXT BIT SHOULD BE A PIECE OF CAKE!

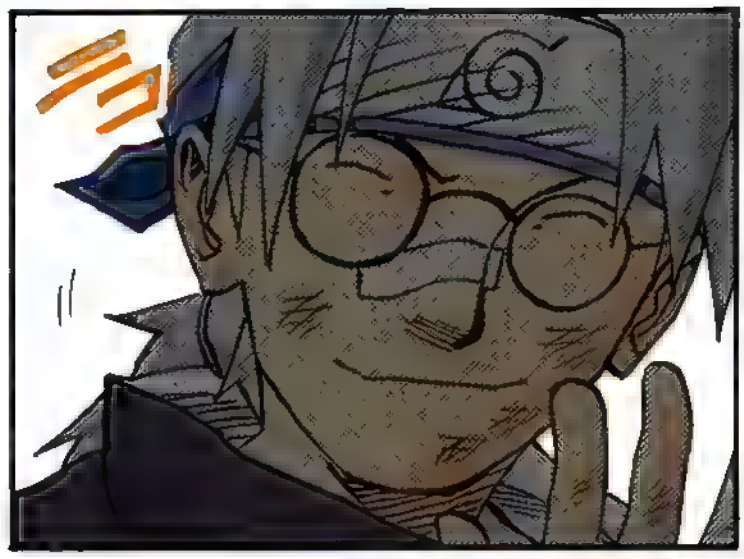
YOU GUYS CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE.

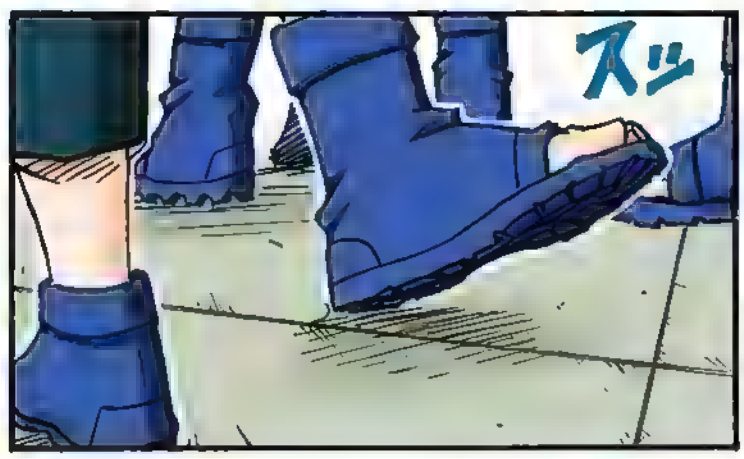
COLORED MANGA.COM











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YOU TOO, NARUTO.

I LOOK FORWARD WITH PLEASURE TO THE DAY OF OUR NEXT METTING, SASUKE...

I'LL ENSURE THERE'LL BE NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU TO TAKE PLEASURE IN LATER...

...SURE AS MY NAME'S YOROI.

LOOKS LIKE NO ONE ELSE IS BAILING OUT.

SO, UHHH...

ゴホッ...

OH, SASUKE... I WAS AFRAID OF THIS...

ANOTHER WAVE OF PAIN... THEY'RE COMING MORE AND MORE FREQUENTLY... BLAST IT!

!

...OHH!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!?

HUNH?!

OWW...

HUNH?!

MAYBE YOU SHOULD QUIT, TOO!

S-SASUKE...

AND IT JUST KEEPS GETTING WORSE!!

THAT MARK ON YOUR SKIN IS HURTING AGAIN, ISN'T IT?

EVER SINCE THAT OROCHIMARU ATTACKED YOU, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN YOURSELF!!

WHAT MARK...?

...IN THE QUEST FOR POWER.

EVENTUALLY SASUKE WILL BE FORCED TO SEEK ME OUT...

I LEFT HIM WITHA PARTING GIFT...

COLORED MANGA.COM

ズキ

ズキ

PLEASE...

.....

!...
I'M
AFRAID...

...PLEASE
WITHDRAW...

YOU'RE IN
NO SHAPE
TO FIGHT,
SASUKE!

POOR
SAKURA!

.....

COLORED MANGA.COM

...THAT YOU'VE BARELY BEEN ABLE TO CONTAIN THE PAIN ALL THIS TIME!

SASUKE, I KNOW...

SHUT UP...!!

I'M GOING TO TELL ALL THE TEACHERS ABOUT THAT MARK! AND THEN...

YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE. IF YOU WON'T LISTEN TO REASON...

I SAID...

パシ

ズ

!

COLORED
NARUTO-MANGA.COM

->SOB<-

KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT! NOT A WORD ABOUT THE MARK!

I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH YOU SUFFER, SASUKE!

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO ACT SO STRONG?!

IT'S MY DECISION... AND IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

THIS PAIN IS MY BURDEN TO BEAR.. ALONE.

!!

.....!!

COLORED BY MANGA.COM

I'M AN AVENGER.

?

REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU, SAKURA...?

"AM I STRONG?" FINDING THAT OUT IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO ME NOW.

I'M HERE TO TEST MYSELF AGAINST THE BEST OF THE BEST.

!!?

AND I DON'T CARE WHETHER I ACHIEVE THE LEVEL OF CHÛNIN OR NOT.

THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A TEST FOR ME...

.....

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

I GIVE YOU MY WORD, ON BEHALF OF US ALL, THAT IF YOU LET US GO

IT MAY S
A LO
TO AS

...B
SOME
BIG
AFO
THAT

AND THE BEST OPPONENTS I COULD FIND ARE ALL AROUND US, HERE AND NOW.

ARA
F
HE
ND,
T
OUR
RVICE.

.....

COLORED
MANGA.COM

NARUTO...

SAKURA IS WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU! DON'T YOU CARE?!

HEY, IDIOT! WHY THE HECK ARE YOU TRYING TO ACT SO COOL?!

...WILL I TURN AWAY FROM THE PATH THAT LEADS TO MY DREAM!

NOT EVEN FOR YOUR SAKE...

YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONES I WANT TO FIGHT...

ドキン

……!!

IT'S JUST AS I'D FEARED...

WHAT CAN WE DO?

ズキン

OHH!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!

QUARANTINE HIM UNDER THE GUARD OF BLACK OPS AGENTS.

PULL HIM OUT OF THE EXAM...

AND YOU REALLY THINK HE'LL JUST GO QUIETLY IF YOU ORDER THAT?

...WILL PROVOKE A REACTION FROM THAT SPELL-MARK, FORCIBLY DRAWING OUT AND DRAINING ALL HIS STRENGTH.

IT'S THE MARK OF A FORBIDDEN ART, WHICH DEBILITATES THE BODY OF THE PRACTITIONER!

DON'T TALK NONSENSE! I'LL STOP HIM BY FORCE IF I HAVE TO. ANY ATTEMPT HE MAKES TO MANIPULATE HIS OWN CHAKRA...

...HE'S A MEMBER OF THE UCHIHA CLAN.

KEEP IN MIND...

L-LORD HOKAGE...!!

I AM STILL CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT OROCHIMARU SAID...

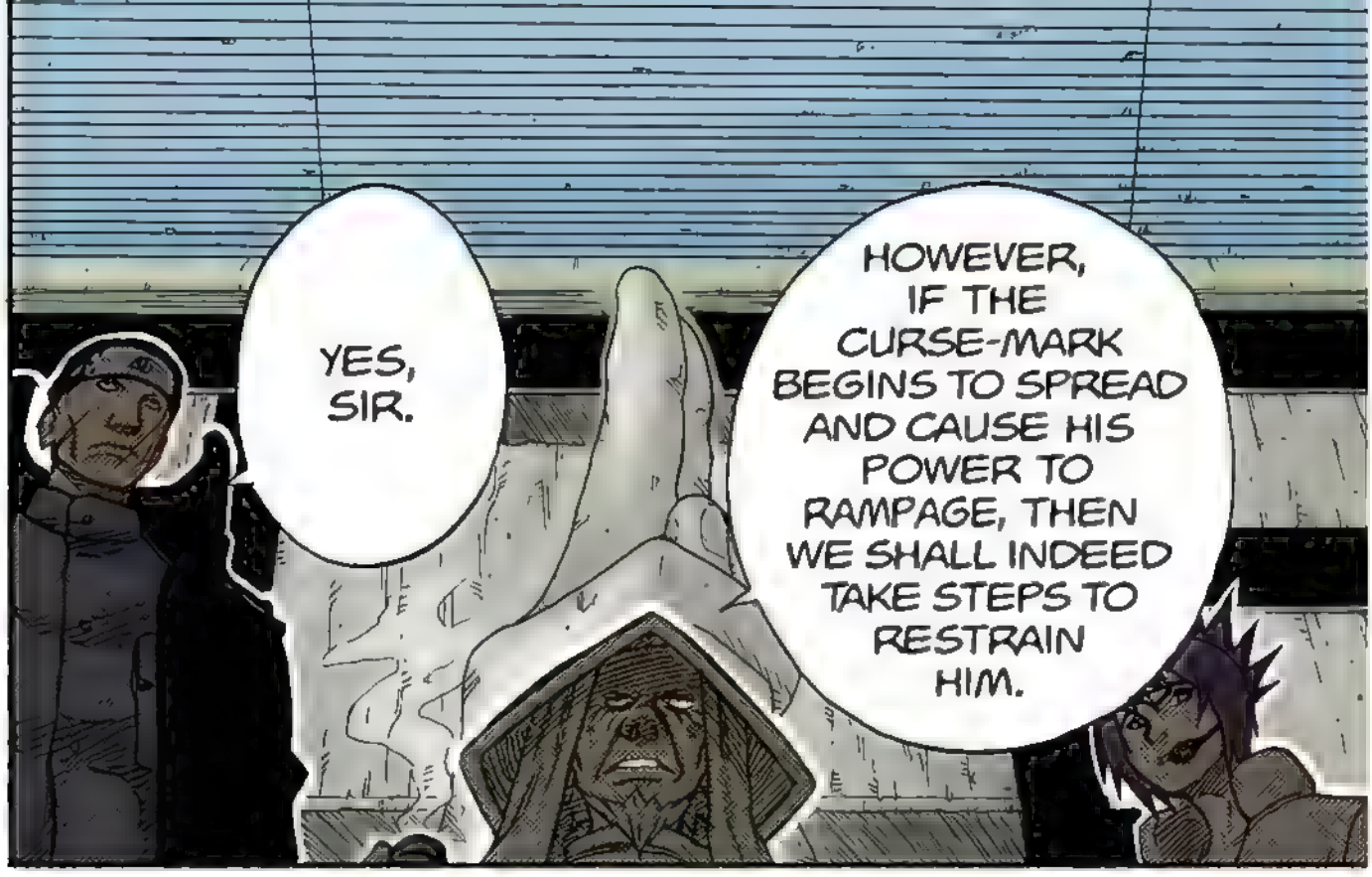
LET YOUNG SASUKE PROCEED AS HE IS, AND WE SHALL KEEP OUR EYES ON HIM.

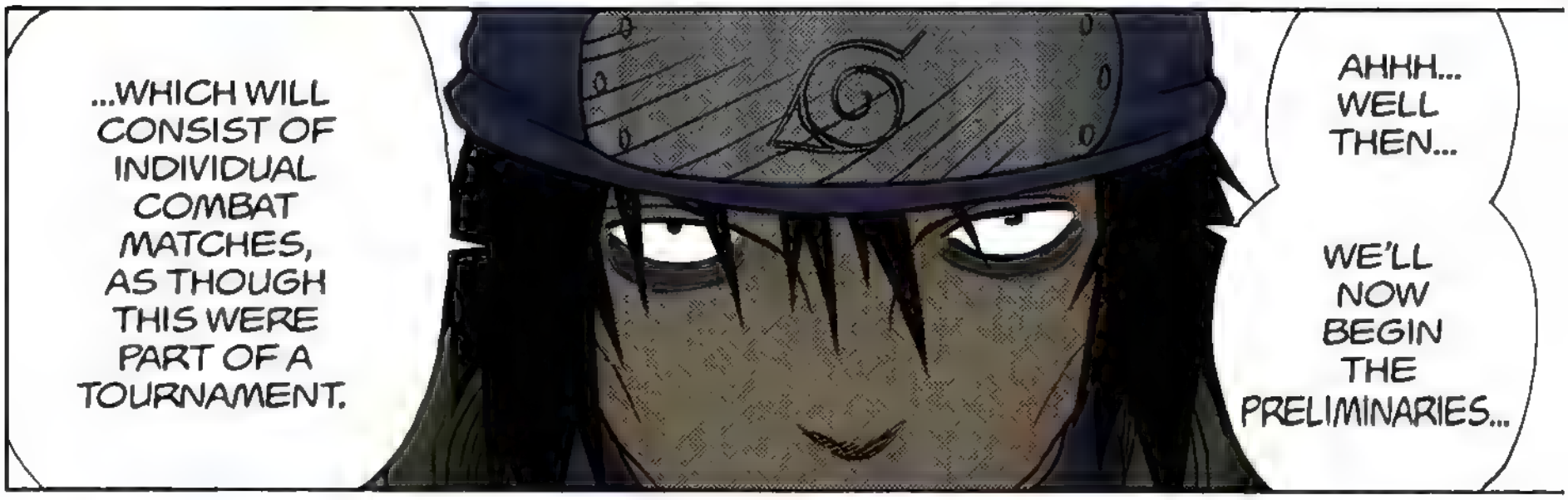
BY ALL RIGHTS, IT SHOULD HAVE KILLED HIM ALREADY.

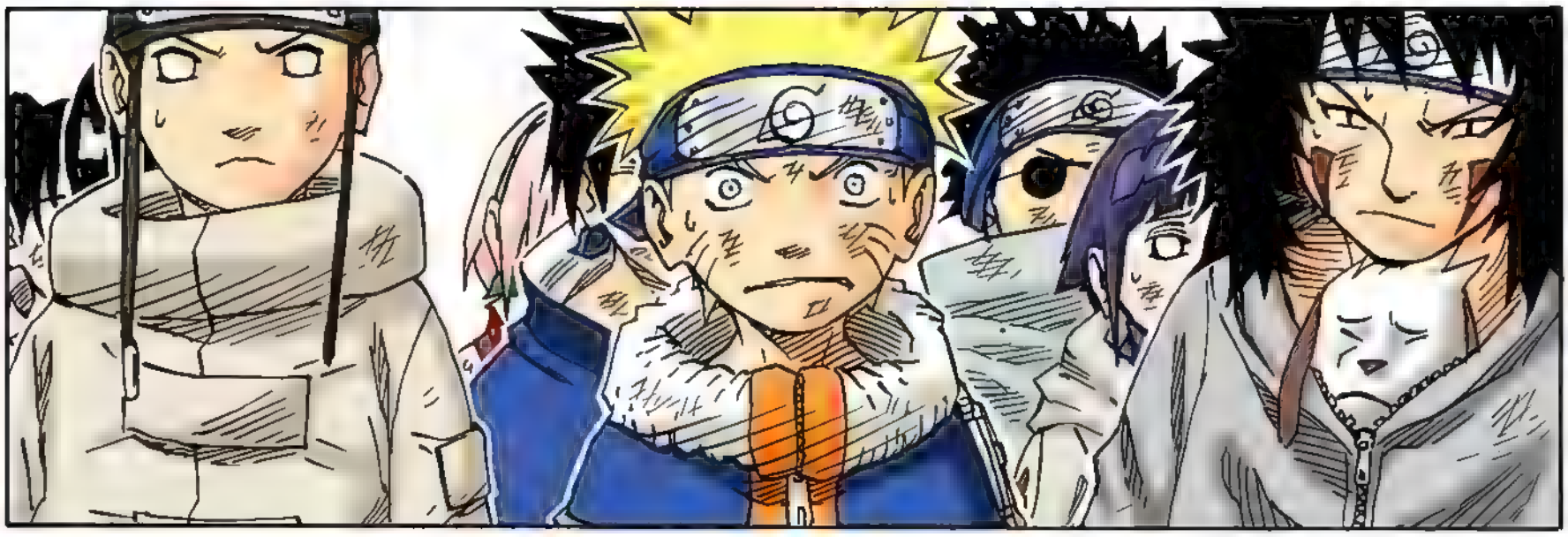
IT'S A MIRACLE THAT A CHILD LIKE HIM IS ABLE TO BEAR IT AT ALL.

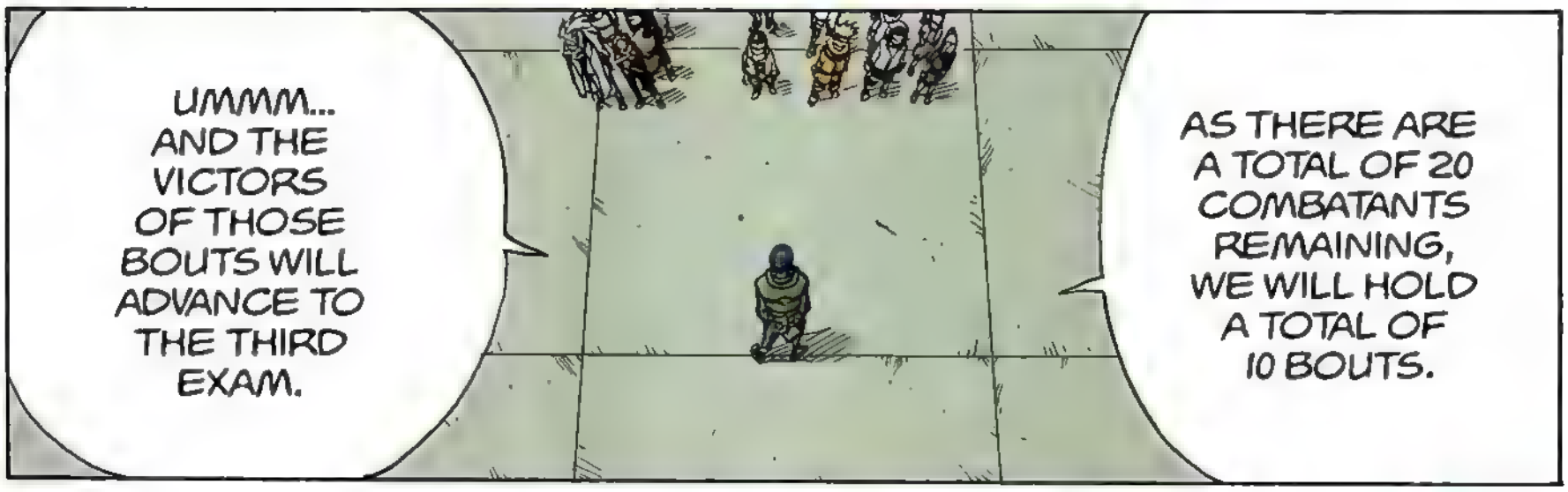
MY LORD!

COLORED MANGA.COM


YES, SIR.
HOWEVER, IF THE CURSE-MARK BEGINS TO SPREAD AND CAUSE HIS POWER TO RAMPAGE, THEN WE SHALL INDEED TAKE STEPS TO RESTRAIN HIM.


...WHICH WILL CONSIST OF INDIVIDUAL COMBAT MATCHES, AS THOUGH THIS WERE PART OF A TOURNAMENT.
AHHH... WELL THEN...
WE'LL NOW BEGIN THE PRELIMINARIES...




UMMM... AND THE VICTORS OF THOSE BOUTS WILL ADVANCE TO THE THIRD EXAM.
AS THERE ARE A TOTAL OF 20 COMBATANTS REMAINING, WE WILL HOLD A TOTAL OF 10 BOUTS.

COLORED MANGA.COM

...WHERE WE ASCERTAIN THAT THERE IS AN UNDISPUTED WINNER AND STEP IN TO END THE MATCH.

BUT DON'T COUNT ON THAT.

UHHH... SINCE WE DON'T WANT A TOTAL BLOODBATH ON OUR HANDS, THERE MAY BE CASES...

ゴボッ

AS SOON AS YOU SENSE THAT YOUR OPPONENT IS OVER-POWERING YOU, IMMEDIATELY CONCEDE YOUR LOSS... IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE.

ゴボッ

THIS IS NO-HOLDS-BARRED COMBAT.

EACH PAIR OF COMBATANTS WILL FIGHT UNTIL ONE OF THEM IS DEAD OR UNCONSCIOUS... OR ADMITS DEFEAT.

ガ"ガ"ガ"

OPEN IT.

FROM HERE ON OUT, THE KEY TO YOUR FATE IS HELD IN...

ゴボッ

SO, UMMM... NOT TO HURRY YOU ALL TO THE SLAUGHTER... BUT LET'S BEGIN. WE'LL NOW ANNOUNCE THE FIRST TWO NAMES.

AT THE START OF EVERY ROUND, WE WILL DISPLAY THE NAMES OF THE TWO COMBATANTS COMPETING IN THAT MATCH...

ぐぐぐ

UMMMM... THIS ELECTRONIC SCORE-BOARD.

COLORED MANGA.COM

ドキ ドキ ドキ ドキ

!!

ドキ

3"

Uchiha Sasuke
VS
Akado Yoroi

!!!

HEH...

I COULDN'T HAVE PLANNED IT BETTER!

RIGHT OFF THE BAT, EH?

ズキ

.....

WILL THE INDIVIDUALS WHOSE NAMES ARE LISTED ON THE BOARD COME FORWARD NOW...?

愛

OH, PLEASE NO! NOT SASUKE!!

AKADO YOROI, UCHIHA SASUKE... YOU TWO HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO COMPETE IN THE FIRST BOUT. ANY OBJECTIONS?

I'M GOOD...

NONE...

COLORED MANGA.COM

ナンバー

67：UNHOLY GIFTS!

COLORED MANGA.COM

.....

HEH HEH...

...IS JUST STAND HERE AND WATCH OVER HIM, SASUKE...!

THE ONLY THING I CAN DO NOW...

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH SASUKE...

...DON'T YOU DARE LOSE NOW!!

SASUKE! IF YOU PLAN TO FIGHT ME LATER...

愛

.....

SHOW US WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF!

GOOD LUCK, SASUKE!!

IT'S, THE CURSE MARK THAT'S CAUSING IT!

HEH... LOOKS LIKE THE BOY'S IN PAIN!

OWW...!

ズキ

...THE PAIN'S NOT GETTING ANY BETTER...

ヒク..

UHHHHH... IT'S TIME FOR THE FIRST ROUND TO COMMENCE... ALL RIGHT?

SKUFF

SHUFFLE

ゴボッ

EVERYONE OTHER THAN THE TWO COMBATANTS SHOULD MOVE TO THE UPPER GALLERY NOW.

SASUKE...

HEY! MASTER KAKASHI!!

TOK TOK

!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!

DON'T USE THE SHARINGAN.

...!

...I FIGURED.

...THE CON-SEQUENCES WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

IF THE SPELL-MARK ON YOUR NECK IS ALLOWED TO RUN RAMPANT...

...HOW DID YOU KNOW?

.....

!!

...SUSPE-NDED?!

.....

AND I'LL BE FORCED TO STOP YOU. PLEASE DON'T FORGET THAT.

IF THEY SEE ANY SIGN OF THAT, THE MATCH WILL BE SUSPENDED.

COLORED MANGA.COM

.....

SUKE, T USE THE RINGAN AIN!!

IF I USE MY CHAKRA CARELESSLY, THE MARK WILL TAKE OVER MY PSYCHE, CALLING UPON AND EXPENDING ALL OF THE POWER I HAVE...

THE MARK SEEMS TO RESPOND TO MY CHAKRA.

HEH HEH...

...ARE THE VERY WORST YOU COULD FACE, SASUKE!

WHAT A PITY THAT YOROI'S TALENTS...

SO... FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS MATCH... NOT ONLY IS THE SHARINGAN VERBOTEN...

...BUT I'LL ALSO HAVE TO BE RESTRAINED IN USING MY CHAKRA EVEN FOR THE NORMAL ARTS!

COLORED NARUTO MANGA.COM

HOW SHOULD I DO THIS?

NOW...

SASUKE... DON'T OVER-EXTEND YOUR-SELF...

死

ANGA.COM

SHALL I START?

GO FOR IT.

PLEASE BEGIN!

ALL RIGHT...

RUSTLE

COLORED MANGA.COM

HYAAA!!

RATS!!

ズキ

COLORED MANGA.COM

UNH...

UNH!

!!

!

AH!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!

KRAK

OW!

!

YES!!

HMPH!

TUG TUG

.....!!!

MY STRENGTH... IT'S FADING?!

!!?

COLORED MANGA.COM

HI HI

AAHH!!

SHIVER

SHIVER

SHAKE

SHAKE

EP

!?

SHAKE SHAKE

SWAT

!

A''

UNNH...

TWITCH

TWITCH

TWITCH

WH-WHY...? WHERE DID ALL MY STRENGTH GO?

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!

SASUKE!!

!!!

!!!

TREMBLE

TREMBLE

SHIVER

SHAKE

HEH HEH...

!!

!!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

...YOU'RE... FEEDING ON MY CHAKRA...

SASUKE...!!

!!

IT'S A BRILLIANT ART WHEREBY SIMPLY PRESSING THE PALM OF HIS HAND AGAINST AN OPPONENT'S BODY GIVES HIM THE ABILITY TO CONSUME THEIR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ENERGIES.

EXACTLY! YOROI'S UNHOLY GIFT IS THE ABILITY TO ABSORB ANOTHER'S CHAKRA!

...HEH HEH... FINALLY FIGURED IT OUT, EH?

THAT'S IT... OPEN YOURSELF UP...

...TO ALL THAT DELICIOUS POWER!!

...YOU WILL HAVE NO RECOURSE BUT TO CALL UPON THE POWER OF MY CURSE-MARK!

AAUGH!!

AND ONCE ALL YOUR CHAKRA HAS BEEN DEVOURED, SASUKE...

COLORED MANGA.COM

OWW!!

...SON OF A...!!

IF YOU TRY TO RESIST THIS PATH YOU WILL SURELY DIE!

OHH... YOU...

PUF

HUF

HUF

UNH...!!

THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE... BUT HOW DO I...?

IT'S WHAT HE'S AFTER... TO KEEP ME WITHIN HIS REACH...

HUF

THAT WAS... TOO CLOSE...

IF HE MAKES CONTACT WITH ME AGAIN I WONTEVEN HAVE ENOUGH ENERGYTO MOVE...

PUF

...HAVING ANY STRENGTH LEFT TO OPPOSE ME.

HEH HEH... IMAGINE A LITTLE VERMIN LIKE YOU...

ズン

OLORED
ANGA.COM

SASUKE...!!

...THIS IS ALL HE CAN DO?

UCHIHA SASUKE...

.....

!

!

!

THAT'S !!

AREN'T YOU EMBARRASSED TO HAVE EVERYONE SEE YOU AS A BIG LOSER?!

HOW CAN YOU STILL CALL YOURSELF UCHIHA SASUKE?! YOU'RE A DISGRACE TO... TO YOURSELF!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

HEH...

ﾊｯ

.....!!

THAT'S IT!!

THIS IS IT!!

NOW I'LL ABSORB ALL OF HIS CHAKRA!

YOU COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A WORSE TIME TO LET YOUR MIND WANDER!!

!!!

GUESS THIS IS THE END...

.....!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

THAT'S MY...!!

!!

WHAT!?

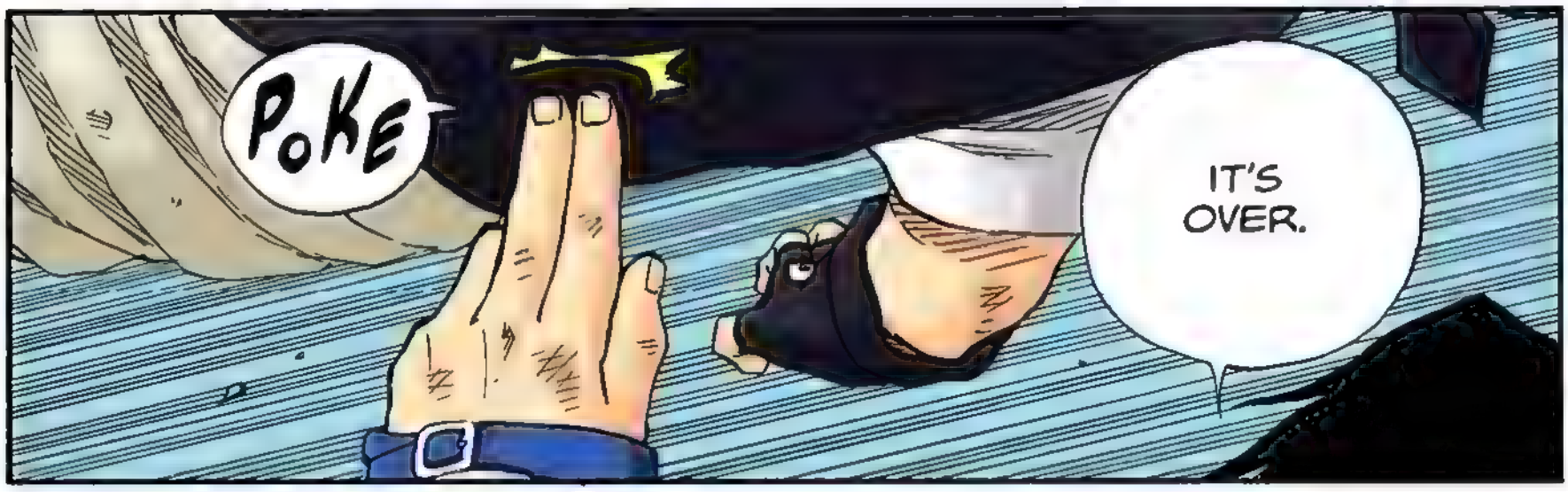
!!!

AFTER THIS, I'LL LIMIT MYSELF TO MY OWN SPECIAL SKILLS, BUT FOR NOW...!

COLORED MANGA.COM

ナンバー

68 : BLOOD OF THE UCHIHA



COLORED MANGA.COM

EAT THIS!

OH!

KAGEBUYO -- SHADOW OF THE DANCING LEAF...?!

!

!!

OW...

THE SAME WAY EVERY TIME...!

CRAP...!!

ニヤ

.....

PLEASE...

!!

HURTS

スゥゥゥ

HMPH... THEY WORRY... MAYBE TOO MUCH.

HEY, IDIOT! WHY THE HECK ARE YOU TRYING TO ACT SO COOL?!

...PLEASE WITH-DRAW...

COLORED MANGA.COM

HE'S REACHED HIS LIMIT!

LIE BACK AND LET IT...

...I'M NOT JUST GONNA...

...CONSUME ME!!

ドクン

THE CURSE MARKS' ARE... RECEDING!

!!

!

!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

SHHF

!!

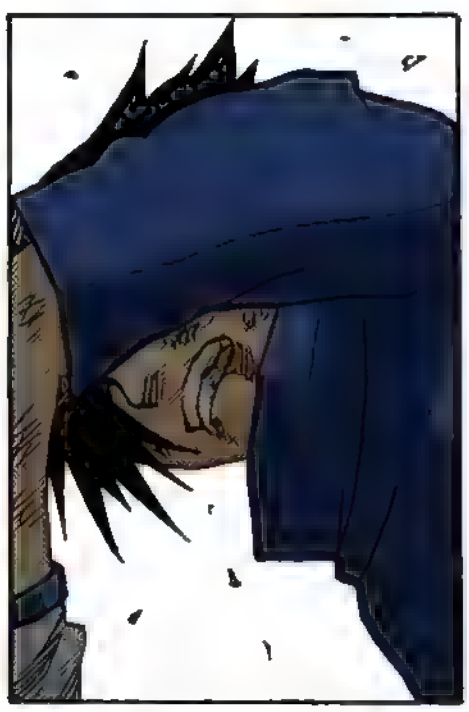
LET'S GO!

EH...?

ガッ

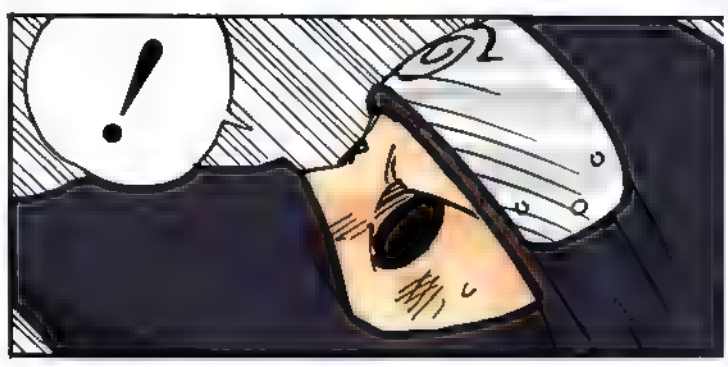
!!

COLORED MANGA.COM



BRUSH
STUPID AMATEUR!

ZZZN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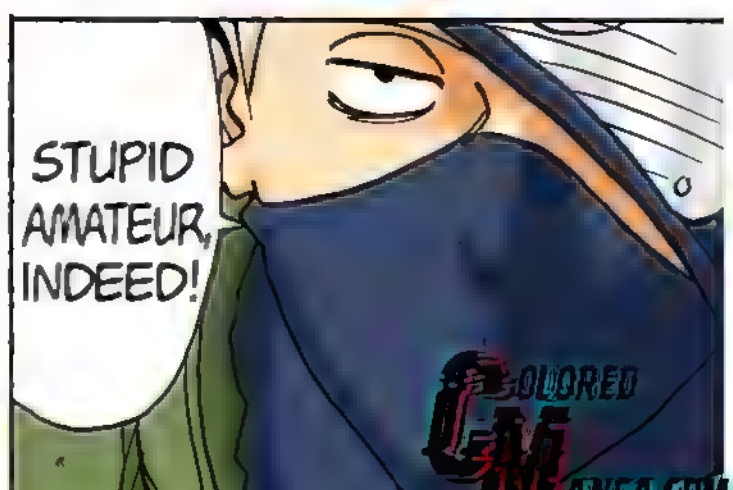

STUPID AMATEUR, INDEED!

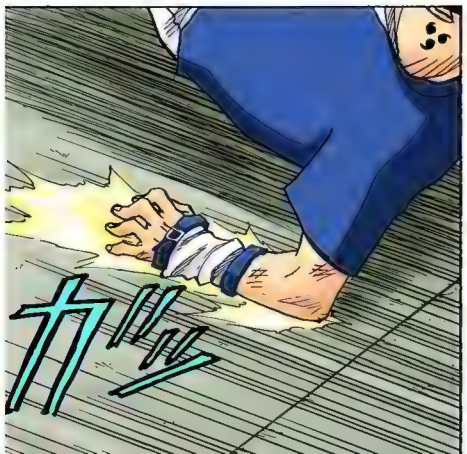
ARGH!!

AGH!!

AND NOW...

COLORED MANGA.COM

SHI-
SHI-
RENDAN!
BARRAGE
OF
LIONS


カリッ

ゴボッ

COLORED
MANGA.COM

!

スザッ

PLIT

.....

COLORED MANGA.COM

!

I CAN TELL WITHOUT EVEN LOOKING...

ゴホッ

ゴホッ

SHF

ゾグゾグ

!

HUF

HUF

PUF

PUF

HUF

UCHIHA SASUKE IS THE CHAMPION OF THE FIRST BATTLE... AND ADVANCES PAST THE PRELIMINARIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

I'M HALTING THIS MATCH BEFORE IT GOES ANY FURTHER. IN OTHER WORDS...

HUF

HUF

HUF

COLORED MANGA.COM

フラフラ

!

HE DID IT!!!

HMPH...

.....

MAKE OUT VIOLENCE

...HE MUST HAVE USED HIS SHARINGAN EYE TO MEMORIZE THOSE MOVES WHEN HE SPARRED WITH THAT LEE KID!

IT LOOKED LIKE THE TECHNIQUES HE USED PRIOR TO THE SHISHIRENDAN WERE DERIVED FROM GUY'S FIGHTING STYLE...

AND YOU CAME OUT LOOKING LIKE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO GOT BEAT UP!

!

HEY, SASUKE!

YOU WON... BUT IN SUCH AN UNCOOL WAY!!

HEY! WELL DONE!

!

トン

COLORED MANGA.COM

SASUKE... I'M SO GLAD...

SHUT UP, CLOWN.

HUF

HUF

I GOTTA MAKE SURE I DO AT LEAST AS WELL!!

フル フル

.....

OWW...

BUT, THAT TRICK REALLY WIPED ME OUT...I GUESS IT'S NOT SOMETHING I CAN USE TO OFTEN.

LEE... I OWE MY LIFE TO WHAT I WAS ABLE TO DRAW FROM YOU.

IF I HADN'T SEEN YOUR MOVES UP CLOSE WHEN WE WENT HEAD-TO-HEAD, THIS ONE WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT REALLY BADLY.

COLORED
NARUTOMANGA.COM

I GET IT!

.....

QUITE A SECRET WEAPON...

THE SHARINGAN MIRROR-WHEEL EYE!!

IN JUST ONE ENCOUNTER, HE MANAGED TO ACQUIRE AND MASTER THE MOVE I USED ON HIM!

...A LITTLE ...AFRAID.

I FEEL...

GASP... OW...

HE'LL ONLY GET STRONGER AS TIME GOES ON...

SASUKE ISN'T SOMEONE TO UNDER-ESTIMATE!

COLORED MANGA.COM

THE LOTUS, OR RENGE, IS NOT A SIMPLE THING THAT CAN BE MASTERED IN A SINGLE DAY, EVEN THROUGH THE USE OF THE SHARINGAN. AND THE EXPRESSIVENES OF THAT FINAL MOVE...

THE MOVES OF THE LOTUS SERIES-- A SEQUENCE OF HIGH-S[EED TAIJUTSU PHYSICAL SKILLS-- REQUIRE A BODY THAT'S BEEN GRADUALLY TRAINED AND HONED OVER A LONG PERIOD.

.....

LIKE STUDENT, LIKE TEACHER, EH, KAKASHI? ARE ALL YOUR KIDS THE SAME KIND OF PUNK YOU WERE?

17

.....

...COMING INTO THE FULL FLOWER OF HIS SHARINGAN ABILITY AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE!

HE'S QUITE A BOY...

IF THEY FOUGHT EACH OTHER, WHO WOULD WIN?

THERE'S LAST YEAR'S TOP ROOKIE, HYUGA NEJI... AND IT LOOKS LIKE THIS YEAR'S WILL BE UCHIHA SASUKE...

COLORED MANGA.COM

"BEWARE, THE FEARSOME POWER OF THE BLOOD OF THE UCHIHA"!

NO WONDER PEOPLE SAY...

愛

ピク…

THE POWER OF THAT CURSE MARK SHOULD HAVE HAD FULL SWAY OVER HIM... YET HE SUPPRESSED IT BY AN ACT OF SHEER WILL!

AMAZING!

……

……

IF IT HAPPENED ANY OTHER WAY, IT WOULDN'T BE SUCH FUN.

NOT THIS AGAIN...

COLORED NARUTO MANGA.COM

COME ON!

IT WASN'T THAT GREAT!

W-WOW...

I'M STARVING! MY STOMACH COULD NOT BE MORE EMPTY!

...THAT'S IT. WE'RE DONE FOR!

OOOOOH! SASUKE! YOU'RE THE BEST!

BRILLIANT...

フル フル

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'D BE GETTING YOURSELVES INTO.

...WE MUST ESCORT YOU, TOO, AND PUT YOU UNDER THE CARE OF THE MEDICAL CORPS... SO YOU CAN GET THE BEST POSSIBLE TREATMENT.

UCHIHA SASUKE...

COLORED BY MANGA.COM

HE CAN COME WITH ME RIGHT NOW, AND...

!

スッ

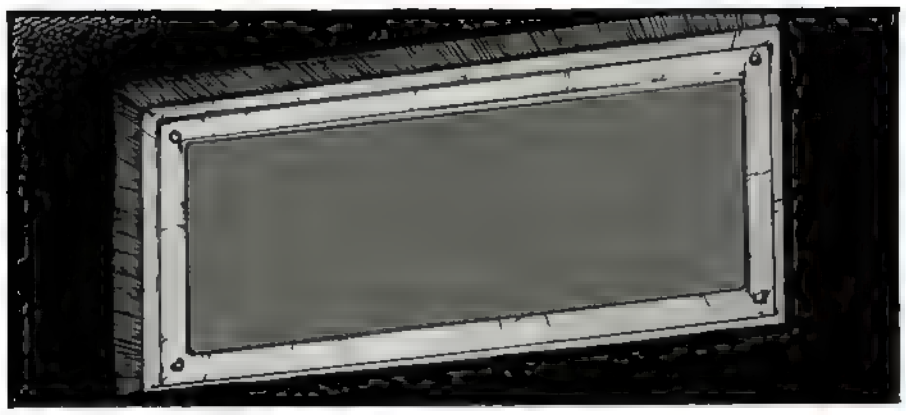
I'LL HANDLE HIM.

!

...I'LL SEAL AWAY THE CURSE MARK.

TAP

.....



I WANT TO WATCH EVERYONE ELSE COMPETE.

CAN'T THIS WAIT?

WELL THEN... RIGHT! LET'S GET THE NEXT MATCH GOING.

COLORED MANGA.COM

THIS THING IS SPREADING LIKE A DISEASE, AND IT'S ALREADY CLOSE TO THE POINT OF NO RETURN.

I LET YOU HAVE YOUR OWN WAY ONCE, AND IT'S ONLY MADE YOU GREEDY.

DON'T LET YOUR EMOTIONS CLOUD YOUR JUDGMENT!

NO!

Zaku Abumi

VS

Aburame Shino

.....

WHO'S THAT LOSER?

COLORED MANGA.COM

SASUKE...

!

スタ

トタ

ナンバー 69 : THE DEADLY VISITOR!!

.....

...DID YOU SEE THAT WEIRD BRUISE ON SASUKE? IT WAS GROWING LIKE A FUNGUS!

HEY, SAKURA... DURING THE FIGHT...

!

...IF HE KNOWS, HE'LL WASTE ENERGY WORRYING ABOUT ME.

SAKURA, IT'S FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM...

PROMISE YOU WON'T MENTION THIS MARK TO NARUTO.

PROMISE ME...

HUNH?

COLORED BY MANGA.COM

HMM...

I'M... NOT REALLY SURE.

...FOR THE SECOND MATCH OF THE PRELIMS TO BEGIN!

UHHH... ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE. IT'S TIME...

ナンバー 69 :

THE DEADLY VISITOR!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

HOW CAN HE HOPE TO FIGHT?

...THE ONE WHO FOUGHT SASUKE AND ENDED UP WITH TWO BROKEN ARMS.

IT'S THAT SOUND NINJA...

.....

OUT OF ALL THE PEOPLE HERE, HE'S THE ONLY ONE I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO UP AGAINST ...

HE'S PRETTY TOUGH.

I HOPE SHINO'S UP TO THIS...

OKAY... YOU MAY BEGIN.

COLORED MANGA.COM

.....

スッ

SO ZAKU

HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO FIGHT HIM? I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE

AND I'M BETTING I CAN TAKE YOU WITH ONE HAND TIED... SO TO SPEAK.

ドン

CRUNCH

IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THIS, YOU'LL GET HURT SO BADLY YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME.

WALK AWAY... WHILE YOU CAN.

ヒ

ヒ

スッ

HAH. LOOKS LIKE THIS ARM STILL HAS SOME LIFE LEFT IN IT.

ダ…
ダ…

IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN ONE ARM TO BEAT ME!

GRR--!

ｸﾞﾆｯ

!!

SEE HOW YOU LIKE... THIS!!

JUST SHUT UP!!

COLORED
MANGA.COM

ZANK-
UHA! THE
BLAST
THAT
SLICES
THE
AIR!!

ZZZZ

!!

(HUF)

スゥ〜スゥ〜

(HUF)

HAH!

COLORED MANGA.COM

スッ

スッ

THAT'S IT!!

ポタ

JUST A LITTLE LONGER AND IT'LL BE ALL DONE.

FUJAHÔIN! THE SEALING OF THE CURSE!

COLORED NARUTO MANGA.COM

OWW!

ズズズ

AAA—!

ズズズ

ズキン

ズズ

AGH!

ズズ

ズズ

HMM...

カッ

11°

OHH...

COLORED
MANGA.COM

YOU HAVE TO WANT IT TO WORK... AND YOU MUST BELIEVE IN YOUR OWN POWER TO CONTROL IT. IF YOU DON'T...

...THE CURSE COULD HAVE ITS WAY AGAIN!

SASUKE... THE FOUNDATION OF THE SPELL'S POWER IS IN THE STRENGTH OF YOUR OWN WILL.

BUT...

EVEN IF THE CURSE MARK AWAKENS AGAIN...

...THE POWER OF THIS FUJAHÔIN SPELL SHOULD CONTAIN IT.

YOU'RE SO WORN OUT, I BARELY RECOGNIZE YOU.

FLOP

WOBBLE

...YOU'RE...

...LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP.

SKF

SO... YOU'VE MASTERED THE SPELLS OF SEALING, KAKASHI?

COLORED MANGA.COM

OROCHIMARU...

.....

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME...

I'M HERE ABOUT THE BOY BEHIND YOU.

...PARDON MY RUDENESS, KAKASHI, BUT... I HAVE NO USE FOR YOU.

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH SASUKE...?

KNOW WHAT IT IS YET?

YOU HAVEN'T HAD IT FOR VERY LONG YOURSELF, YOU KNOW.

!?

...AND A THIRD ONE'S JUST GOT TO GET IT, TOO!

OH, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS... TWO GUYS HAVE SOMETHING...

COLORED
NARUTOMANGA.COM

...THE SHARINGAN!!

...IT'S...

!

...UCHIHA BLOOD!

I MUST POSSESS...

.....!!

.....

WHAT FOR..?!

...THE NEWLY CREATED VILLAGE OF HIDING IN SOUND -- OTOGAKURE...

...THAT IS MY HOME, YOU SEE...

IS IT BECOMING CLEAR?

COLORED BY NARUTOMANGA.COM

I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY THAT...

SO IT'S JUST YOUR GREED... AND DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR.

ON YOUR FEET, LOSER!

...AND I NEED ALL SORTS OF PAWNS AT MY DISPOSAL.

GOOD HELP IS SO HARD TO FIND THESE DAYS...

!

スッ…

ムク…

COLORED MANGA.COM

...WH-WHAT THE...?!

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パキ

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ピカッ

B-BUGS?!

THEY'RE SWARMING OUT THROUGH HIS SKIN... FROM INSIDE HIS BODY!

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!

ガサ

ガサ

ガサ

AH!

THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL SURVIVE AN ONSLAUGHT OF THIS MAGNITUDE...

SO... IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE...

DO YOU LIKE MY LITTLE FRIENDS? THEY'RE CALLED KIKAICHU-- PARASITIC DESTRUCTION BEETLES. THEY ATTACK IN SWARMS AND DEVOUR THE CHAKRA OF THEIR PREY.

EEK...

USE YOUR LEFT-HAND STRIKE ON ME AGAIN...

...AND THEY'LL INSTANTLY BE ALL OVER YOUR UN-PROTECTED BACK.

...YOU'D BETTER SURRENDER.

IT'S YOUR ONLY WAY OUT.

COLORED BY MANGA.COM

UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU HAD THE FORESIGHT TO PREPARE A BACKUP PLAN.

...AND YOUR FRONT WILL BE OPEN FOR MY ATTACK.

YOU'RE FINISHED EITHER WAY.

USE YOUR LEFT-HAND STRIKE AGAINST THE KIKAICHU SWARM...

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT DEVELOP?

AUGH...

I SEE A CERTAIN POTENTIAL IN YOU, BOY...

DON'T LET ME DOWN!

I WON'T...

...AND WE'LL DEVELOP IT TOGETHER!

JOIN ME. FIGHT FOR ME...

COLORED MANGA.COM

...I WON'T BE DISGRACED ANY FURTHER!

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO?!!

ニヤ

HEH...

HOW ABOUT THIS?!

YOU WANNA SEE A BACKUP PLAN?!

GOOD ONE, ZAKU.

SMOOTH... THE FIRST PART OF THE BATTLE WAS ALL A SCAM TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HIS RIGHT ARM WAS STILL PARALYZED...

WHAT?! HE CAN USE HIS RIGHT ARM!

.....!!

COLORED MANGA.COM

...IS ONE OF YOUR PAWNS?

SO, YOU THINK THAT SASUKE...

TAKE THIS!!

...A REAL KEEPER..

OH, HE'S A VERY SPECIAL PAWN...

COLORED MANGA.COM

HUNH?

!!

!!

ボゴッ

!!

WHAT ON EARTH...?!

!!?

!

COLORED
MANGA.COM

JUST NOW, WHILE I DISTRACTED YOU WITH ALL THAT HELPFUL ADVICE, MY LITTLE FRIENDS WERE MAKING THEIR QUIET WAY TO KEY POINTS UPON YOUR BODY...

...CREEPING DOWN THE TUNNELS YOU BLAST YOUR GALE WINDS THROUGH. AND THAT, MY FRIEND, IS A TRUE BACKUP PLAN.

...UNLIKE THE BOYS WHO ARE GOING THROUGH THE RIGORS OF THE EXAM PROCESS RIGHT NOW.

.....

ZU'UU

Y-YOU...!

...ARE DISPOSABLE.

THOSE BOYS...

COLORED MANGA.COM

ナンバー 70 : THE ONE WHO DIES!!

STAY AWAY FROM SASUKE.

TAK

SKF

...THE MAN I AM TODAY CAN TAKE YOU DOWN!

EVEN IF YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE THREE NINJA...

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

HA HA HA HA HA!

HEH HEH...

.....

HEH...

COLORED MANGA.COM

YOU SAY ONE THING...

...AND DO ANOTHER.

WHEN A HEART IS SUFFICIENTLY FOCUSED AND RUTHLESS IN ITS DESIRES...

...THEN, FOR GOOD OR EVIL, THE END WILL JUSTIFY ANY MEANS.

SASUKE POSSESSES JUST SUCH A HEART...

...THE HEART OF AN AVENGER.

WHAT?!

THE CURSE-BINDING SPELL YOU PLACED UPON SASUKE WAS FUTILE!

!?

SO THAT'S HOW YOU GOT YOUR HOOKS INTO HIM...

BUT SASUKE'S NOT-!

A DAY WILL COME WHEN HE WILL SEEK ME OUT...

...HUNGRY FOR POWER!!

TAK

MEAN-WHILE... I BELIEVE YOU WERE OFFERING TO KILL ME.

CARE TO TRY?

COLORED
MANGA.COM

OR ARE YOU ALL TALK?

ナンバー

70 : THE ONE WHO DIES!!

WHAT KIND OF FOOL AM I?!

HUF

DID I MIS-CALC-ULATE?!

HUF

ｲｰ!

COLORED MANGA.COM

-;KOFF;-

HE'S... FINISHED.

COLORED MANGA.COM

WH-WHAT THE...? HOW DID... NEJI...?!

.....

BY AKU-GAN! THE ALL SEEING EVIL EYE!

I THOUGHT HE'D USED A SUMMONING SPELL TO MARSHAL THE BUGS, BUT...

WHOA...

!!

ｸﾞｲｲｰﾝ

COLORED MANGA.COM

WH-WHAT?!

THERE'S A LEGEND IN KONOHA OF A CLAN OF BEETLE-MASTERS...

I'VE HEARD THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ANYONE BORN INTO THE CLAN...

...IS THAT FROM THE MOMENT THEY ENTER THE WORLD, THEIR BODIES ARE GIVEN OVER TO THE CRAWLING VERMIN TO USE AS NESTS.

YES... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...

HIS WHOLE BODY'S INFESTED WITH THEM!

AND YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT SHINO...

...AND THE BEETLES ARE COMPENSATED BY THE ABUNDANCE OF THE MASTER'S CHAKRA, WHICH THEY CONSUME FOR FOOD.

CHAKRA

THE BEETLE-MASTERS ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE BUGS, WHEREIN THE SWARMS WILL ANSWER TO THE MASTERS CALL, FIGHTING HIS BATTLES AND BENDING TO HIS WILL...

COLORED MANGA.COM

WHY DID HIS ARMS EXPLODE?!

POOR ZAKU...

...IS A MEMBER OF THIS CLAN?!

ENERGY BEETLES

CHAKRA

WHEN ZAKU TRIED TO UNLEASH THE ZANKUHA, THE PRESSURE BUILT UP INSIDE HIS ARM WITH NOWHERE TO GO, UNTIL...

...THIS SHINO CHARACTER DIRECTED THE BEETLES TO PLUG UP THE EXIT HOLES IN ZAKU'S HANDS.

FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS...

...LIKE A GUN BARREL WHEN THE PATH OF A BULLET IS BLOCKED, ZAKU BLEW HIS OWN ARM OFF.

!

COLORED MANGA.COM

THE WINNER IS ABURAME SHINO!!

SKF

I'M MAKING IT MY BUSINESS TO ENSURE THERE'S PAYBACK.

WE DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER WELL... BUT HE'S A MEMBER OF MY TEAM. AND TEAMMATES LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER.

HEH HEH...

HE'S ALWAYS BEEN CREEPY, BUT...

AW, MAN. I DON'T GET IT! SINCE WHEN DID SHINO GET TO BE TOUGH?!

THAT GUY FREAKS ME OUT.

UGH...

TAK

TAK

SUDDENLY, HE'S ACTING LIKE HE'S THE BOSS OF US!!

HEY!

WOOF

SO... DON'T LET THE TEAM DOWN.

YEP.

THAT WAS AWESOME!!

SO, UH... SHINO... NICE JOB.

COLORED MANGA.COM

!!

MASTER KAKASHI!!!

YO!

SO... UHHH... WE'RE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT MATCH.

ゴホ

VNN

!

MASTER KAKASHI, TELL US ABOUT SASUKE! IS HE ALL RIGHT?!

!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "YO"?!

OH...!

PHEW...

UNDER THE GUARD OF A BLACK OPS TEAM... BUT ASLEEP.

HE'S FINE... SOUND ASLEEP IN THE INFIRMARY EVEN AS WE SPEAK.

COLORED MANGA.COM

Tsurugi Misumi
vs
Kankuro

ALL RIGHT... THEN... YOU MAY BEGIN.

!

HIM AGAIN!

...AT LAST!

MY TURN...

FOOL!

.....

KANKURO... ...ISN'T TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY AT ALL.

THIS WON'T TAKE LONG AT ALL.

SSCIP

I AGREE...

IN FACT, LET ME MAKE ONE THING PERFECTLY CLEAR... YOU'D BE BETTER OFF FORFEITING THE MATCH BEFORE YOU GET HURT.

EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE BRAT...

...I'M NOT LETTING DOWN MY GUARD LIKE YOROI DID.

COLORED MANGA.COM

ッ!!

ダン

TAP

...I'LL BE FINISHED WITH YOU IN NO TIME.

DON'T TRY ANY TRICKS. I'M GOING TO WIN THIS WITH THE FIRST STRIKE!!

Hop

ニヤ

COLORED MANGA.COM

ズルルル

WHAT?!

!

ズズズ

ガッ

ミシ

ドサッ

UNH..

AND WITH THIS SAME POWER, I CAN KEEP SQUEEZING AND CON-STRICTING UNTIL YOUR BONES CRACK!

THE LONGER YOU WAIT TO SURRENDER, THE TIGHTER I'LL SQUEEZE!

メキメキ

I CAN DISLOCATE EVERY JOINT AND MANIPULATE MY LIMP BODY BY THE POWER OF CHAKRA ALONE!

IN ORDER TO GATHER INTELLIGENCE, I'VE HAD MY BODY ALTERED SO THAT IT CAN INFILTRATE EVEN THE SMALLEST SPACE.

ゴロ ゴロ

グッ

SLOTHED
MANGA.COM

YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME...

ナルメ!!

AND IF YOU GIVE THE SMALLEST HINT OF TRYING ANYTHING CLEVER IN ORDER TO AVERT DEFEAT...

...THEN I'LL SNAP YOUR NECK LIKE A TWIG!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR OWN NINJA ART MAY BE...

BUT ONCE YOUR BODY IS HELPLESS IN MY HANDS, IT DOESN'T EVEN MATTER.

NO WAY...

HEH...

.....

DO YOU? YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET YOUR WISH!

DO YOU WANT TO BE THE ONE WHO DIES...?!

!

グググ...

メキ

メキ

AGH...

メキ

COLORED MANGA.COM

COLORED MANGA.COM

in...

.....

……!

HE BROKE HIS NECK!

WHAT?!

ズーン

ズーン

HE JUST WOULDN'T GIVE UP... SO I KILLED HIM.

ガーン

ブラーン

WHAT A WASTE.

-;SIGH;-

HAH!

THE FOOL!

……

MANGA.COM

!!!

BLINK

AND NOW I CAN RETURN THE FAVOR!! ♡

パン パン

PLINK PLINK

SLICE SLICE

RATTLE RATTLE

WH-WHAT?!

COLORED MANGA.COM

KREAK

I-IT'S JUST A DOLL... A MARIONETTE!!

UNH!

SQUIRM

SO THAT'S THE **REAL** BODY?!

!!

HE'S A PUPPET-MASTER!

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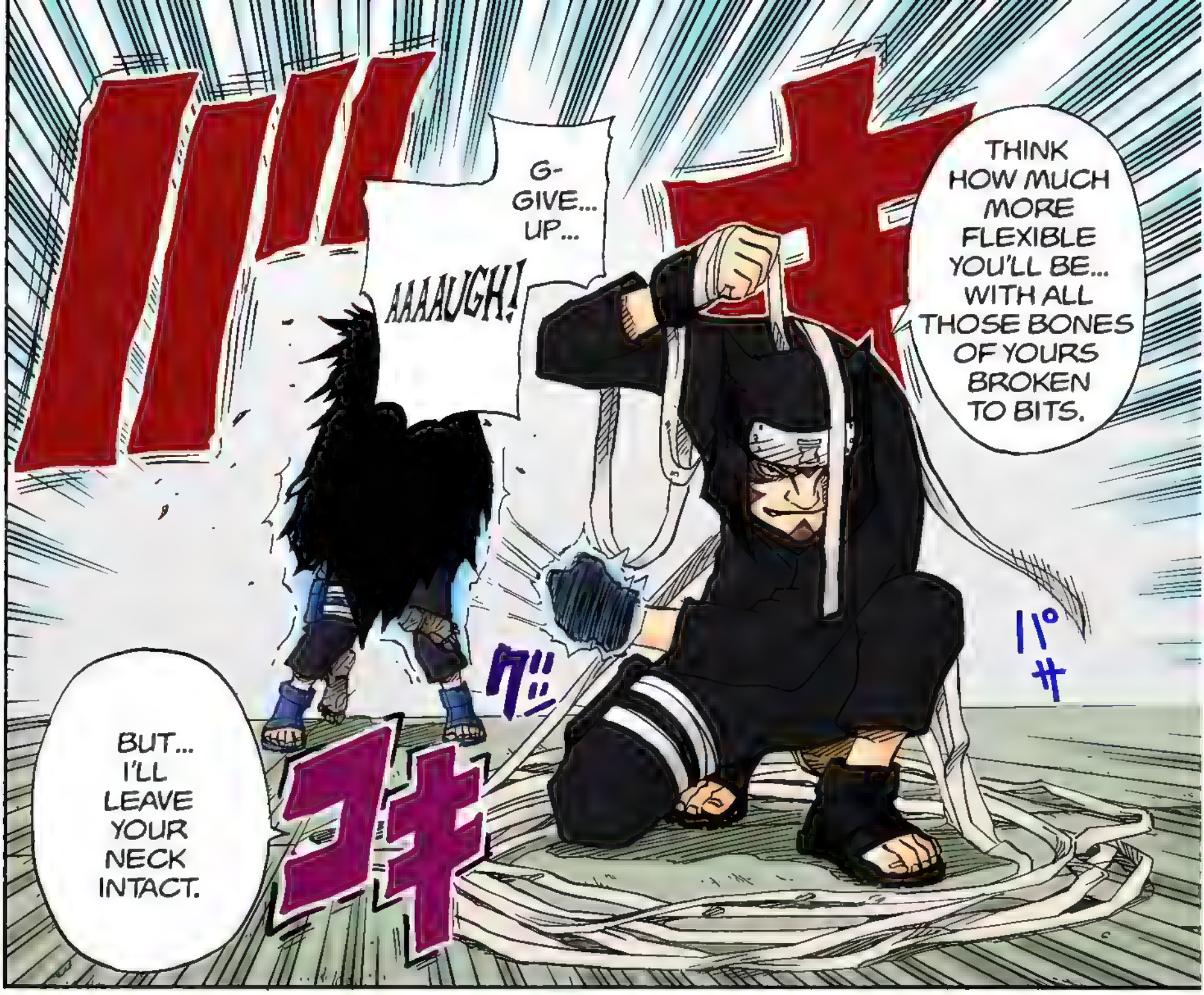
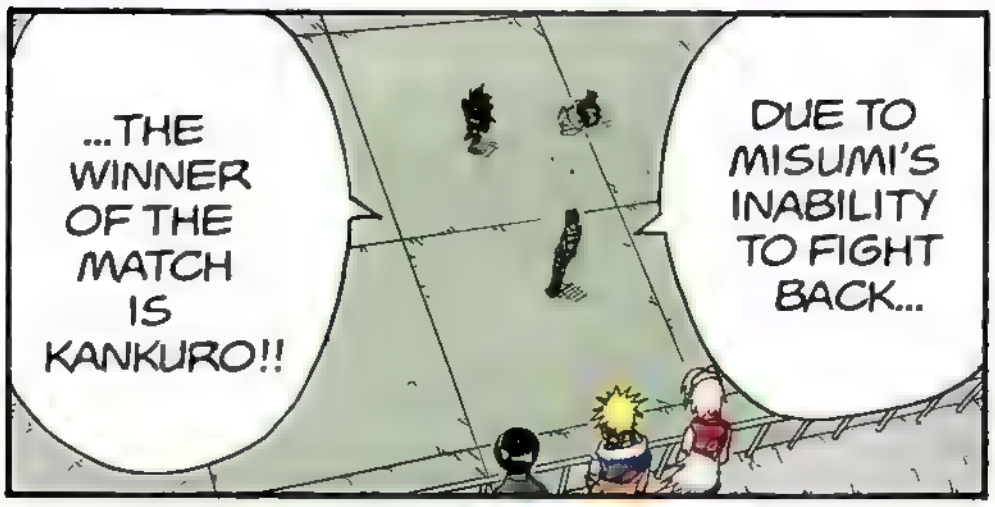

THINK HOW MUCH MORE FLEXIBLE YOU'LL BE... WITH ALL THOSE BONES OF YOURS BROKEN TO BITS.
G- GIVE... UP...
AAAAUGH!
BUT... I'LL LEAVE YOUR NECK INTACT.


...THE WINNER OF THE MATCH IS KANKURO!!
DUE TO MISUMI'S INABILITY TO FIGHT BACK...

AN INTERESTING TURN OF EVENTS! I'M GLAD I DIDN'T STOP THE MATCH BEFORE... WHEN IT LOOKED LIKE THINGS WERE GOING THE OTHER WAY...

THE GOLEM IS A WEAPON, JUST LIKE SHURIKEN THROWING STARS.
HE MANIPULATES A LIFELESS DOLL BY PROJECTING THE POWER OF HIS CHAKRA!!
THE ART OF THE PUPPET-MASTER!!

NOT IN THIS CASE, NARUTO.
THE "OTHER GUY" IS JUST SOME KIND OF GOLEM...
ISN'T IT, MASTER KAKASHI?!
TWO OF THEM AGAINST ONE GUY... ISN'T THAT AGAINST THE RULES?

LOOK WHO'S TALKING.

GOOD ONE, MASTER!!

WHOA! WHOA!

THIS IS LIKE A NEVER-ENDING FREAK SHOW!

IN ANY EVENT... IT'S TIME FOR THE FOURTH MATCH.

!

LOOK.

GASP

EH...?

TAP

I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE LAUGHING IN A MINUTE, SAKURA...

ハルノ・サクラ

VS

ヤマナカ・イノ

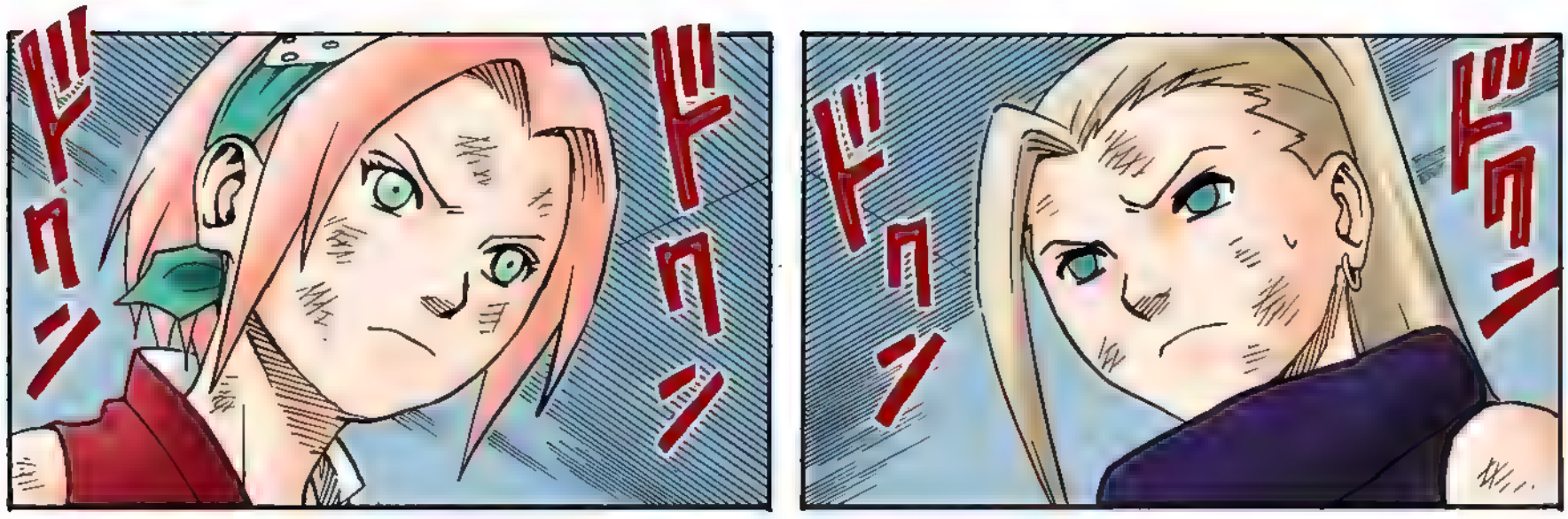
OH!

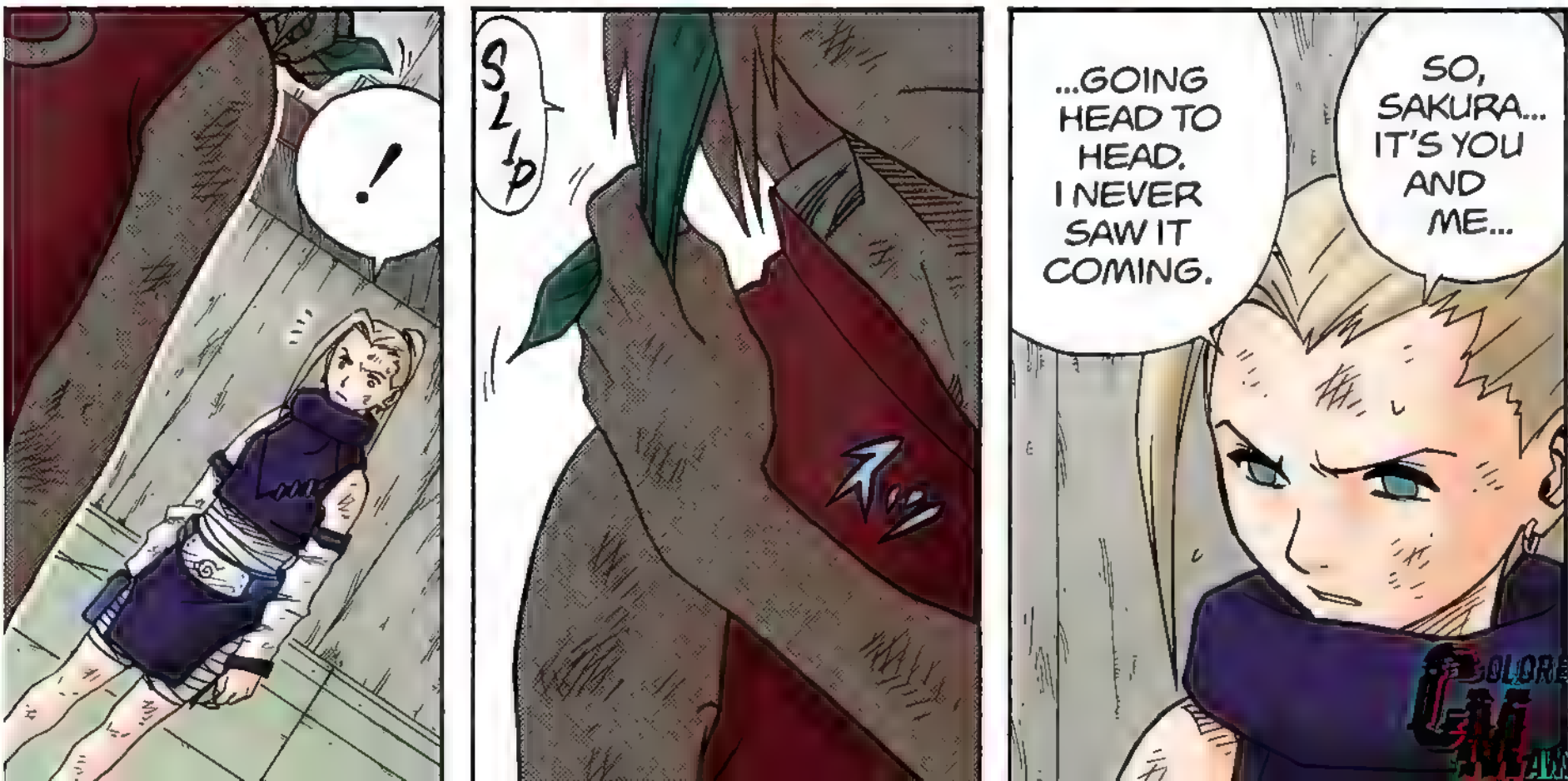
COLORED MANGA.COM

ナンバー

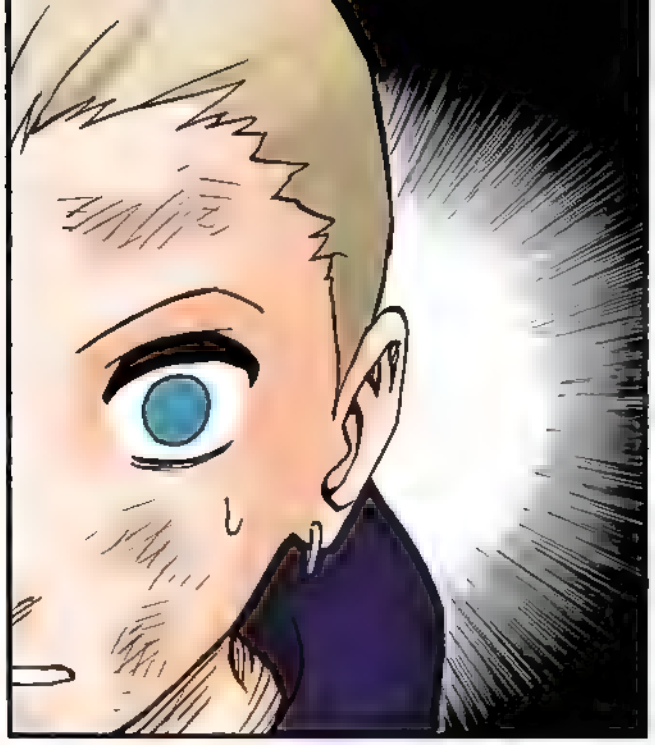
71 : THE INSURMOUNTABLE WALL...!!

COLORED MANGA.COM





COLORED
MANGA.COM



...IF SHE CAN EVEN GIVE SAKURA A GOOD WORKOUT.
INO LOOKS PRETTY FIERCE... BUT AMONG THE KUNOICHI ROOKIES, SHE'S FAR FROM THE TOP OF THE PACK. SO YOU HAVE TO WONDER...

*KUNOICHI = FEMALE SHINOBI

...WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
YEAH, INO...
DO YOU THINK INO WILL BE ALL RIGHT?
WHAT A MESS!
OF ALL THE PEOPLE FOR INO TO GO UP AGAINST, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE SAKURA!

COLORED MANGA.COM

A KUNOICHI NEEDS TO MASTER NOT ONLY THE NINJUTSU THAT EVERY MALE NINJA LEARNS...

...BUT THE FEMININE ARTS AND WOMANLY WILES AS WELL.

!

TODAY WE'LL BE LEARNING THE ART OF *IKEBANA* -- FLOWER ARRANG-ING!

WHEN YOU'RE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF A HOSTILE LAND, YOU'LL DEPEND ON YOUR ABILITY TO PASS YOURSELVES OFF AS NORMAL WOMEN. WITHOUT THAT SKILL...

ﾊｲ

...EVEN THE SIMPLEST OF SPY TASKS BECOMES AN UNMANAGEABLE CHORE.

TO BEGIN, EVERYONE MUST GO OUT AND GATHER WHATEVER FLOWERS YOU PLEASE.

YES, MA'AM!!

ドサ!

EEP!

HEY, INO! WAIT FOR ME!

TAK

TAK

!

WHAT ABOUT YOU, INO?

I'M NO GOOD AT THIS STUFF...

CLUMSY!!

WHOA!

PLUCK

...AND THEN BUILD AROUND IT, ADDING OTHER FLOWERS AS ACCESSORIES TO THE FIRST.

THE TRICK IS TO SELECT ONE FLOWER THAT WILL BE THE FOCUS OF THE ARRANGE-MENT...

OH...

THIS STUFF'S A BREEZE, ONCE YOU GET THE HANG OF IT.

OH, COME ON SAKURA, THAT'S PATHETIC! HOW CAN YOU BE BAD WITH FLOWERS WHEN YOUR NAME MEANS "CHERRY BLOSSOM"?

REALLY?

COLORED MANGA.COM

!

FOR EXAMPLE...

THE BLOSSOMS SHOULDN'T BE IN COMPETITION.

...LIKE THIS *FUJIBAKAMA*-- THE "PURPLE TROUSERS" FLOWER.

...IF YOU START WITH A COSMOS AS YOUR MAIN ATTRACTION, THEN PICK SOMETHING THAT WILL ACCENT IT WELL...

...AND IT DOES HAR-MONIZE WITH ALMOST EVERY-THING.

THE REAL MEANING OF THE WORD "COSMOS" IS "HARMONY" ...

...THE PRETTIEST FLOWER OF THE FALL.

NOW, YOU KNOW A CHERRY BLOSSOM IS A "SAKURA"... AND THE COSMOS IS AN "AKIZAKURA," OR AUTUMN CHERRY...

THEN... WHY DID YOU HESITATE?!

UHH... YEAH!

HEH HEH...

AREN'T I?!

BUT I THINK I'M EVEN PRETTIER THAN THE COSMOS.

ナヨコ

.....

COLORED BY MANGAL.COM

キッ

.....

ズイ

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'RE WORTH IT?

YOU'RE DOING A LOT OF PRIMPING LATELY, AREN'T YOU?

ビク

ヂュ

...LITTLE MISS BILL-BOARD BROW?!

HAVING FUN...

!!

ガガガ

-;GAGK;-

MY BAD. YOU HAVE SUCH A STRAIGHT, UN-CURVED SHAPE FROM SHOULDERS TO KNEES...

...I THOUGHT YOU WERE A BUD VASE! ♡

POOR AMI!!

ドサ

MMRFL! INO!!

COLORED BY NARUTOMANGA.COM

♡ HEH... THE PART THAT'S POISONOUS IS ACTUALLY THE ROOT...

EEEK! TEACHER--!

ドA ドA

.....

BUT A POISON IS STILL A POISON. IF I WERE YOU, I'D BE RINSING MY MOUTH OUT.

IT'S A KIND OF SHINOBI FLOWER... A HYBRID OF WOLF'S BANE. LUCKY FOR YOU, IT'S NOT AS TOXIC AS THE PURE FORM.

AND USING A FLOWER AS A THROWING STAR WAS AMAZING NINJUTSU!

INO IS SO COOL. SHE'S CUTE, AND SHE'S SMART... AND SHE HAS SUCH GOOD FASHION SENSE!

!

BY COMPAR-ISON, I FEEL LIKE SUCH A...

COLOR

.....

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

YOU'RE STILL A BUD!

I DON'T THINK YOU'RE EVEN A FULL-FLEDGED FLOWER YET...

IF YOU'RE A COSMOS, INO...

...THEN I GUESS I'M LIKE THE PURPLE TROUSERS.

.....

HEH HEH... I GUESS SO!

.....

!

AND I'M NOT THE WEAK, NEEDY LITTLE GIRL I USED TO BE. YOU'RE NOT EVEN ON MY RADAR NOW.

YOU'RE NOT EVEN HIS TYPE!

WHAT--?!

I'M NEVER LETTING YOU ANYWHERE NEAR SASUKE.

UNDER-STAND THIS...

!

DON'T COP AN ATTITUDE WITH ME, YOU LITTLE CRYBABY.

SAKURA... I THINK YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO.

COLORED MANGA.COM

HMM..

THAT INO CHICK SCARES ME SILLY!

AW, MAN!

SAKURA JUST CROSSED THE LINE.

...AND SHE'S NOT THE KIND WHO'D BULLY SOMEONE JUST TO BE CRUEL.

SAKURA'S NOT TRYING TO THROW HER WEIGHT AROUND...

...FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE.

SHE'S JUST MAKING SURE INO IS TOO RILED UP TO THINK OF GOING EASY ON HER...

YEAH?

INO...?

I'M... A BUD, EH...?

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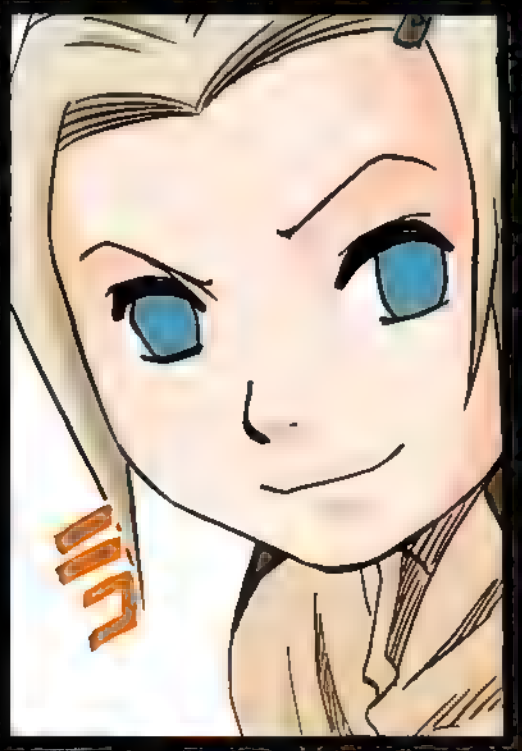
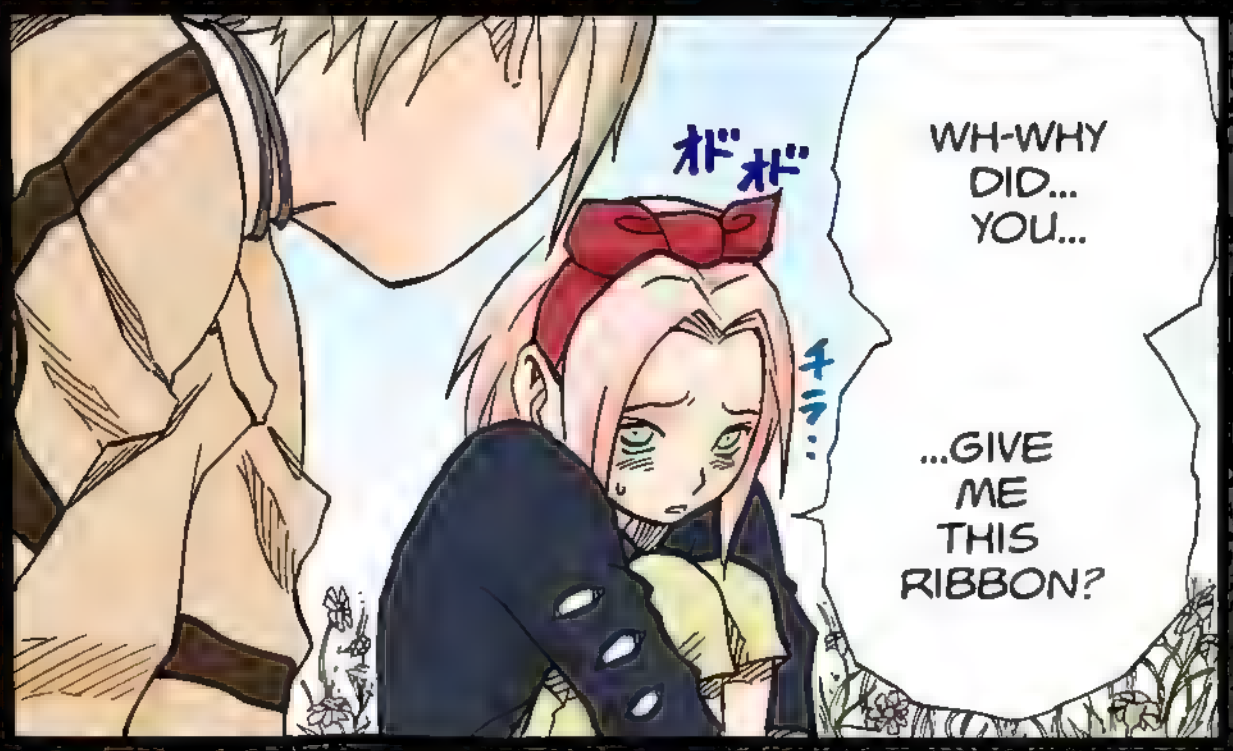
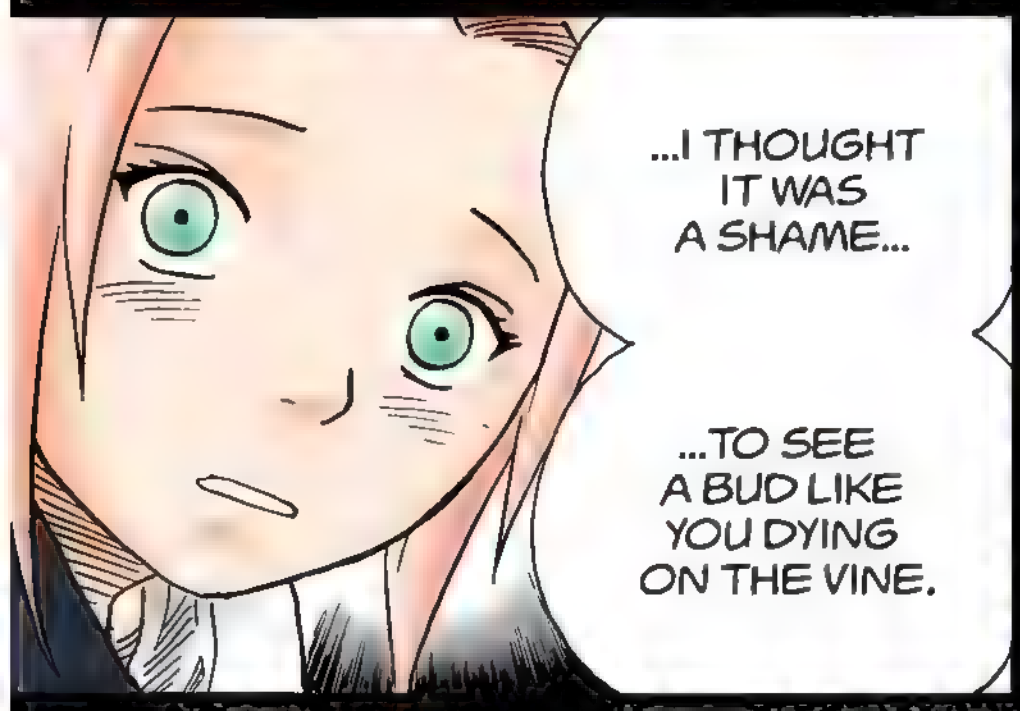
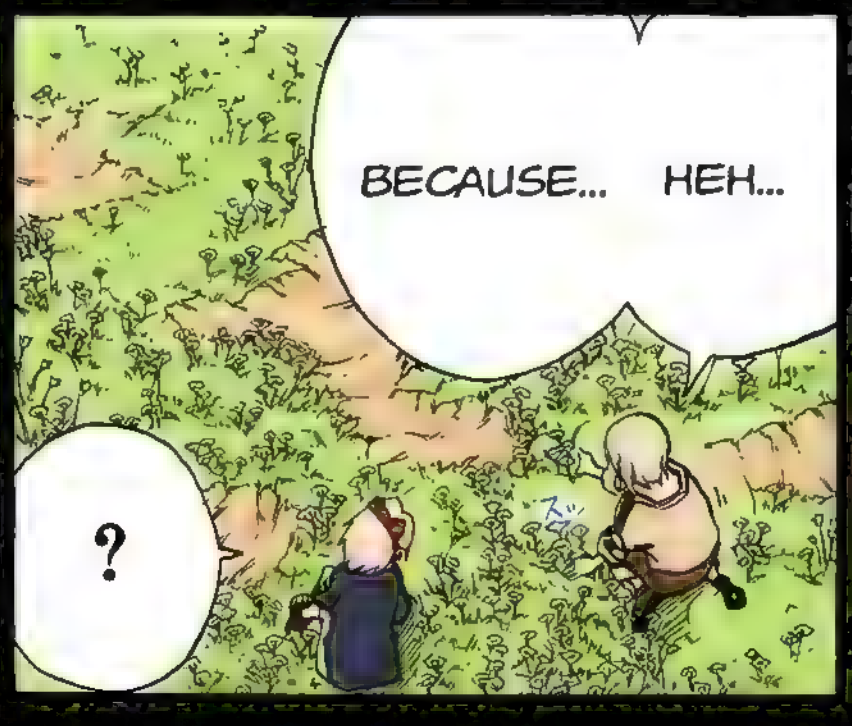
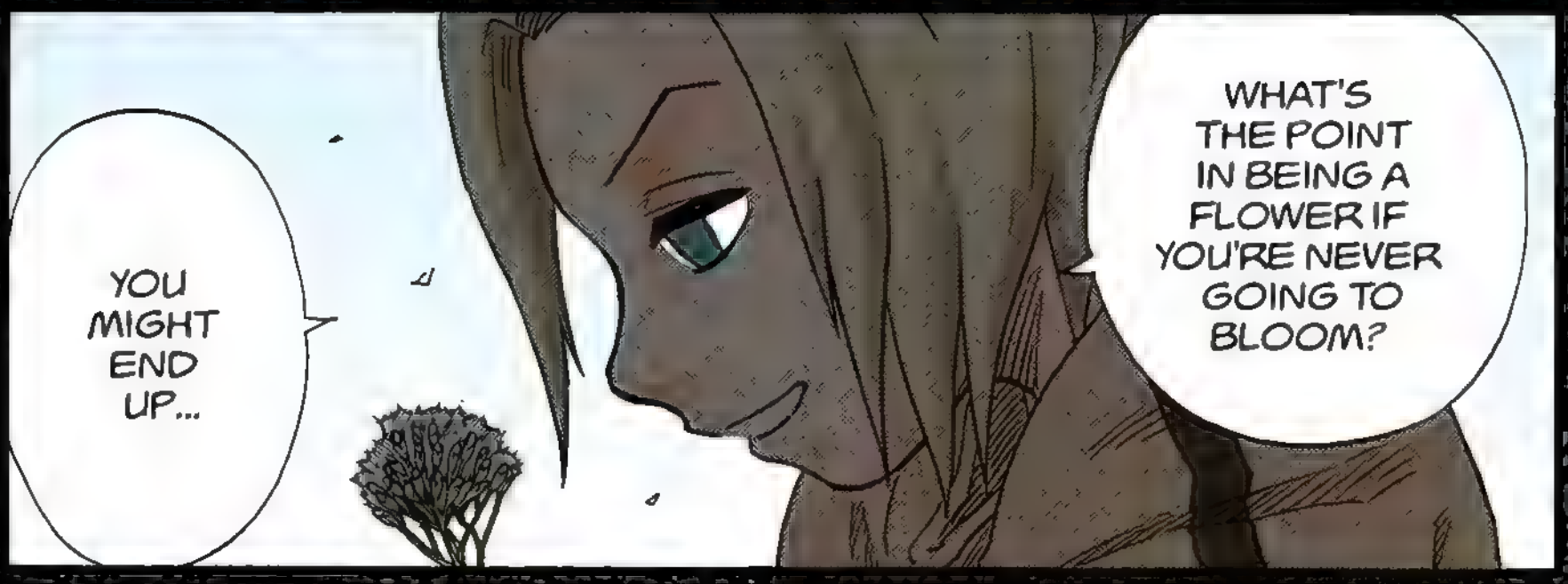



オドオド
チラ…
WH-WHY DID... YOU...
...GIVE ME THIS RIBBON?


...I THOUGHT IT WAS A SHAME...
...TO SEE A BUD LIKE YOU DYING ON THE VINE.


BECAUSE... HEH...
?


YOU MIGHT END UP...
WHAT'S THE POINT IN BEING A FLOWER IF YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BLOOM?

...BEING AN EVEN PRETTIER FLOWER THAN A COSMOS!

ANYWAY... LET'S FINISH GATHERING THE FLOWERS!

OKAY!

HUH? SAKURA, ARE YOU CRYING? WHAT'S WRONG?

NOTHING. I...I GOT SAND IN MY EYES WHEN I FELL.

INO...

THANK YOU!

.....

INO... THAT DAY, YOU HELPED ME TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF, AND I'VE HUNG ON TO THAT EVER SINCE...

...THINKING HOW COOL IT WOULD BE IF ALL THE NICE THINGS YOU SAID WERE TRUE.

I WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE YOU. WORKING TOWARD THAT GOAL IS WHAT MADE ME GOOD ENOUGH TO BE HERE TODAY.

THAT'S WHY, WHEN WE FIGHT, I'M GIVING IT EVERYTHING THAT IVE GOT.

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...WILL MEAN A THING UNLESS I'VE EQUALED YOU... AND SURPASSED YOU!!

NONE OF THIS...

HUNH?!

WELL, NARUTO... RIVALRY IS A TRICKY BUSINESS... NOT THAT I WOULD KNOW.

-SIGH-

HE JUST CAN'T SEE THAT HE'S EXACTLY THE SAME WAY...

...WHEN IT COMES TO SASUKE.

WHAT ARE THEY GETTING SO INTENSE ABOUT?!

...I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SHOW ME UP!!

THAT GOES DOUBLE FOR ME, SAKURA...

SO, INO... YOU'LL NEVER BEAT ME NOW.

SASUKE AND I ARE ON THE SAME TEAM!

NARUTOFANGA.COM

THIS IS YOURS.

!

...THE RIBBON ...

.....

I'M NOT YOUR LITTLE TAG-ALONG ANYMORE, INO!

THAT WAS A GIFT! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO KEEP IT! BESIDES, YOU STILL NEED SOMETHING TO HOLD YOUR HAIR BACK... THAT HEADBAND'S SUPPOSED TO GO ACROSS YOUR FOREHEAD!

.....

...UNTIL THE DAY I CAN STAND UP TO YOU AS A FULL-FLEDGED SHINOBI.

I WON'T WEAR MY LEAF HEADBAND ACROSS MY FORE-HEAD...

!

スッ

OOH, DRAMATIC. SOUNDS GOOD. I THINK...

...I'LL DO THE SAME.

ギュ

SAKURA.

I GET IT...

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LET'S DO THIS... FAIR AND SQUARE!

JUST PLAIN OLD ART OF THE DOPPLE-GANGER?

SPOTTING THE REAL ONE FROM THE FAKES WILL BE A PIECE OF CAKE...

THIS ISN'T AN ACADEMY GRADUATION EXAM, YOU KNOW.

YOU CAN'T BEAT ME WITH CLASSIC, TEXTBOOK MOVES!

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!!

SHE'S SO FAST!!

タン タン

...AND THEN UP! I GO!

タン

I'LL FOCUS ALL OF MY CHAKRA WITHIN MY FEET.

ｶﾘｯｼｭ

AIEE!!

THE GLOVES ARE OFF!!

IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, FINE BY ME.

ｼｭﾀｯ

I KNOW YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS!

I MAY HAVE BEEN A CRYBABY BACK IN THE DAY... BUT WHO'S CRYING NOW? COME ON, INO... STOP HOLDING BACK.

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ナンバー

72：RIVALS!!

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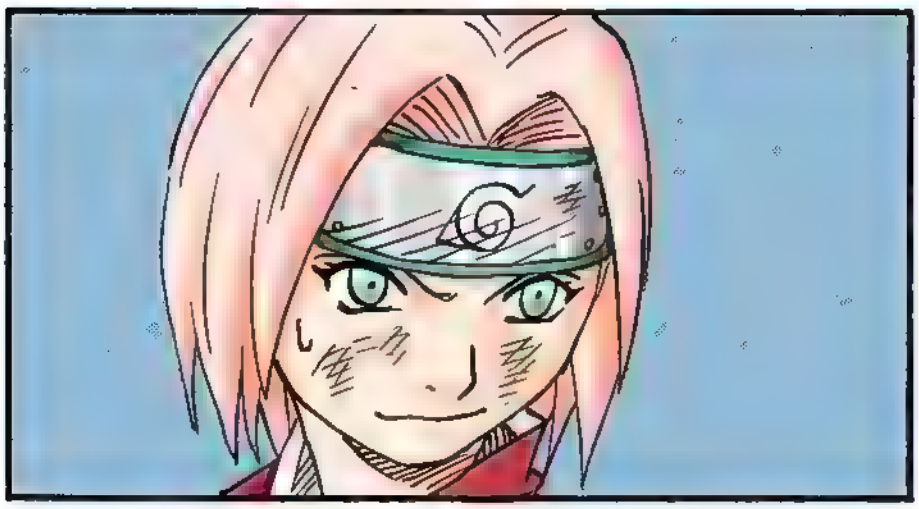

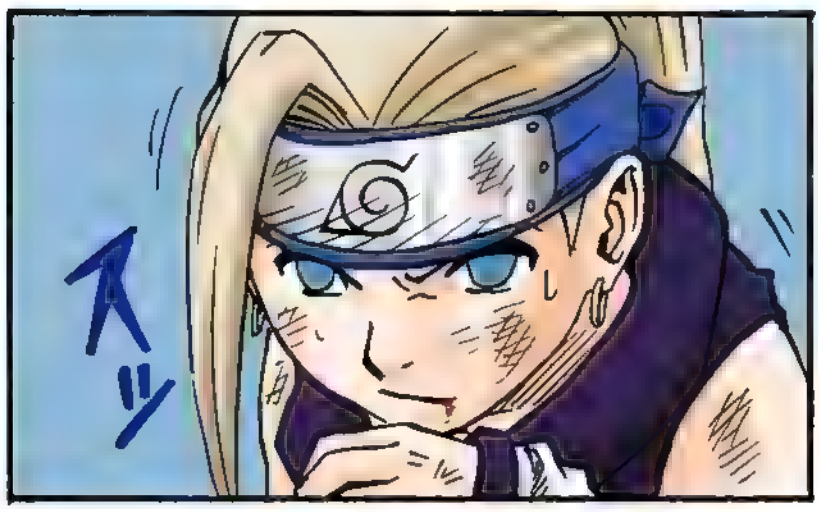

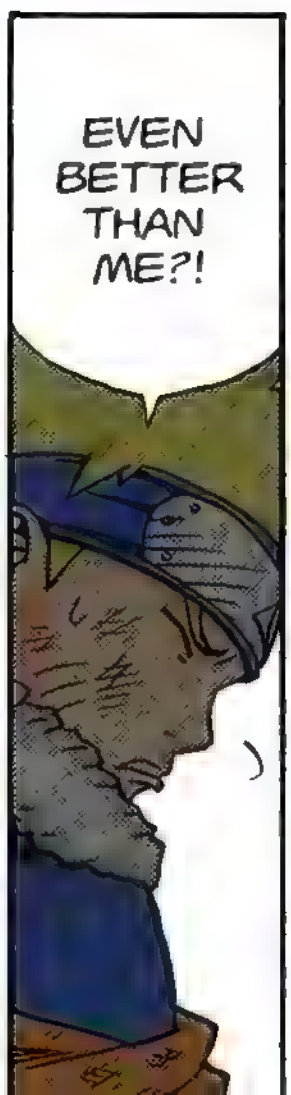

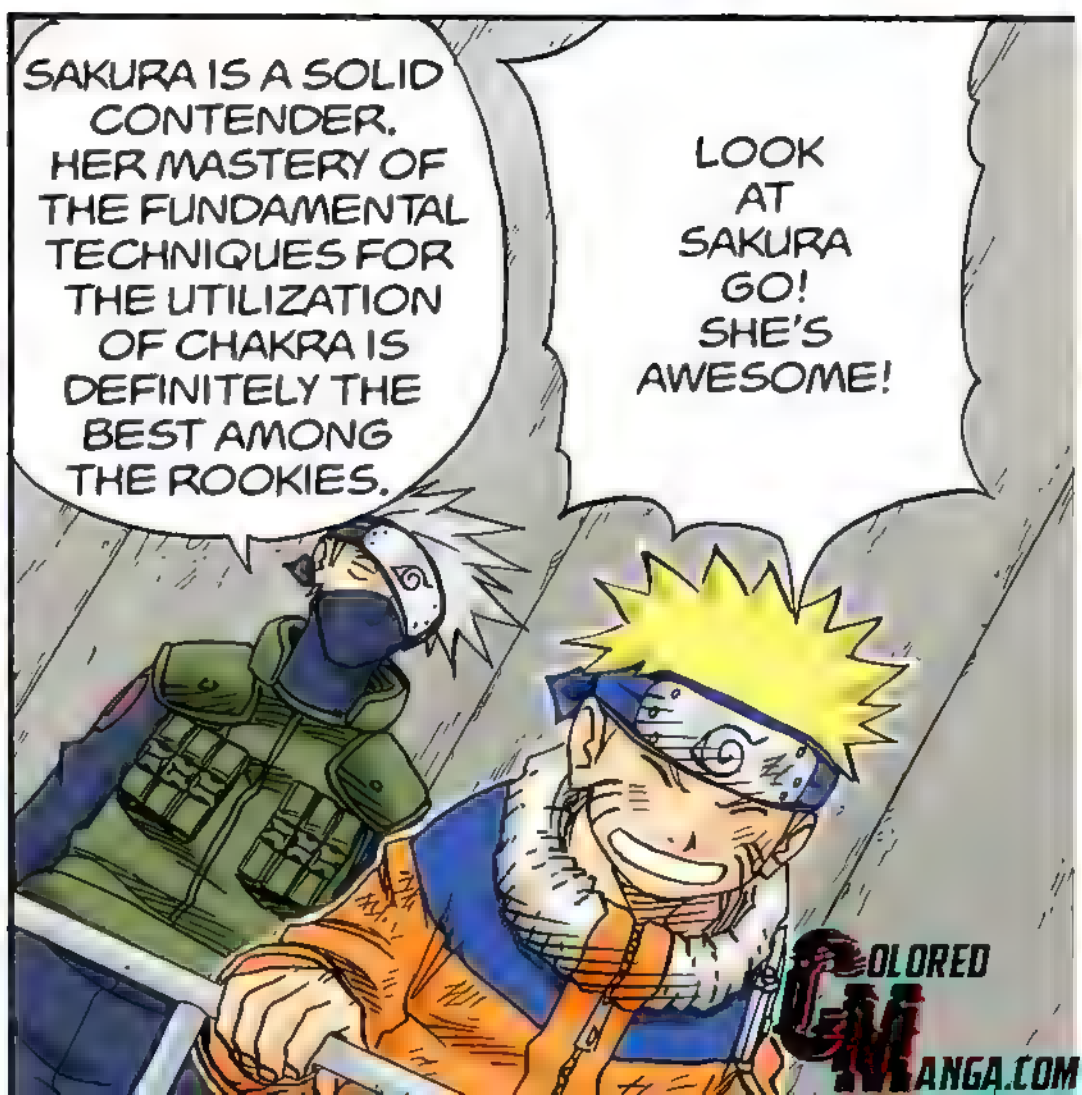
SAKURA IS A SOLID CONTENDER. HER MASTERY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUES FOR THE UTILIZATION OF CHAKRA IS DEFINITELY THE BEST AMONG THE ROOKIES.
LOOK AT SAKURA GO! SHE'S AWESOME!

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...IS AN AREA IN WHICH SAKURA HAS SURPASSED EVEN SASUKE.

THE TECHNICAL ART OF CIRCULATING CHAKRA TO EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY OF THE BODY AND DEPLOYING IT WITH PRECISE TIMING...

...IS A PLEA-SURE!

OH, SAKURA... JUST WATCHING YOU MOVE...

...HAS BEEN SUPERB.

FROM THE BEGINNING, HER MASTERY OF CHAKRA MANIPULATION ...

ガッ!!

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IT LOOKS LIKE A FAIR FIGHT... ONE THAT COULD DRAG ON AND ON.

BUT HER OPPONENT IS ALSO FAR ABOVE THE NORM...

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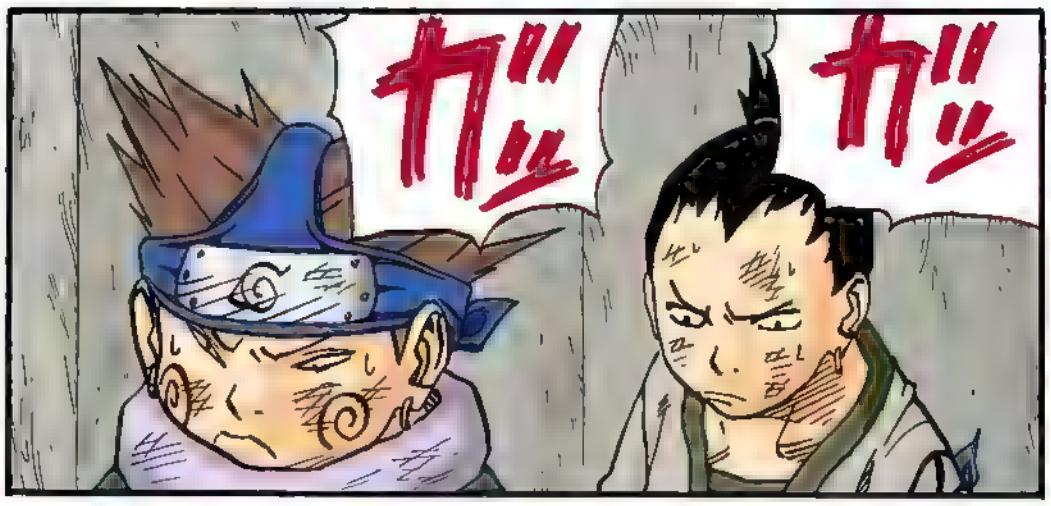

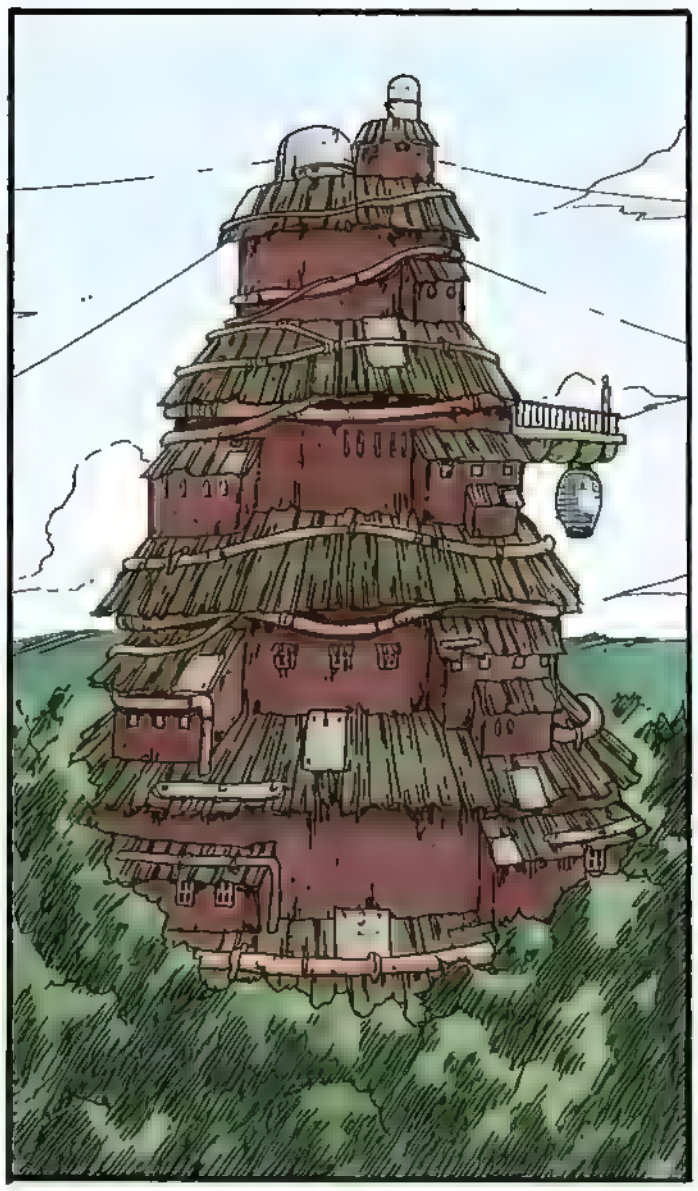

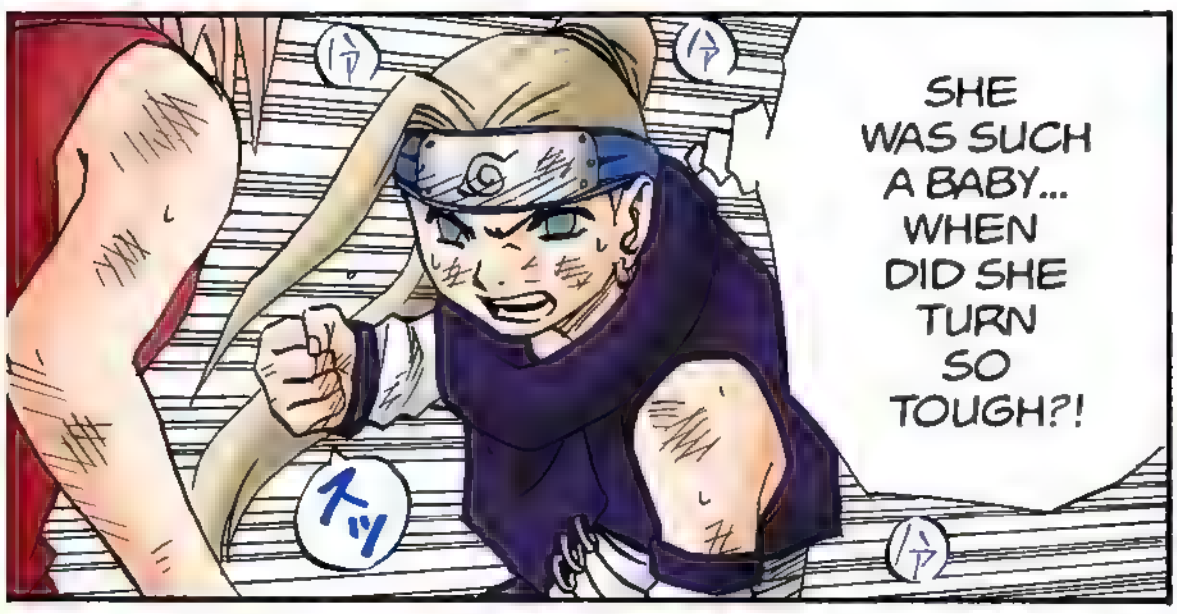

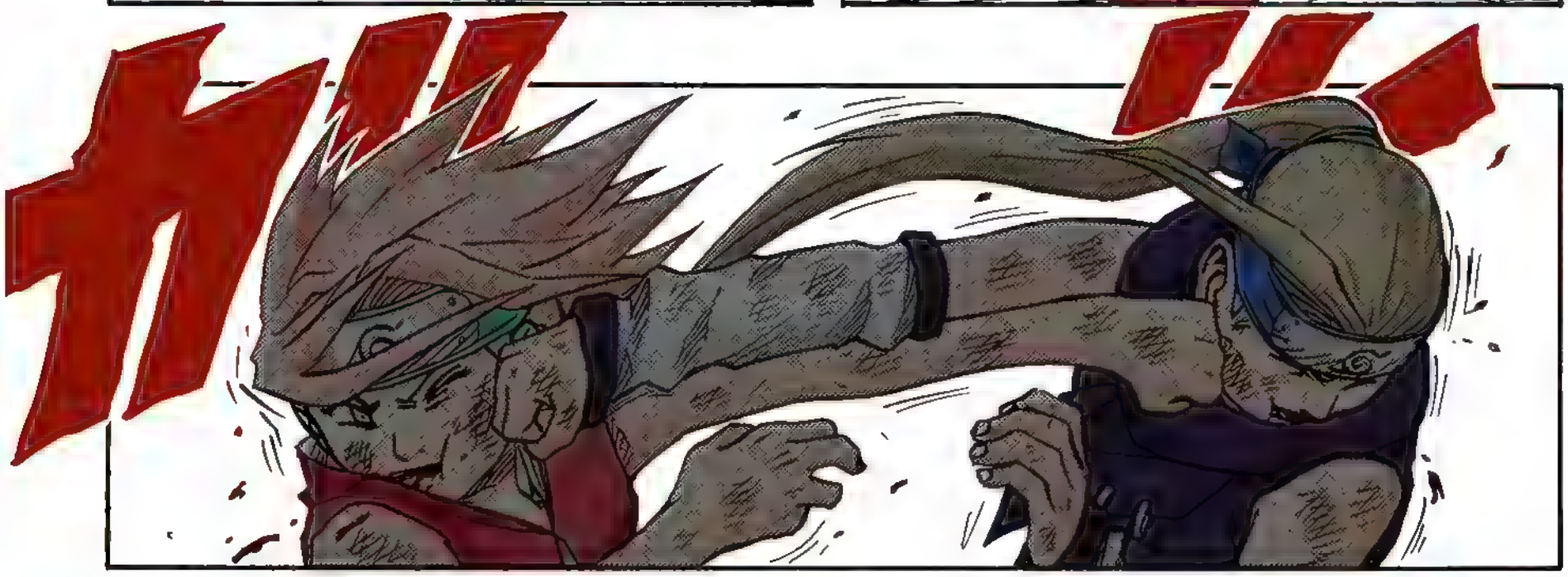

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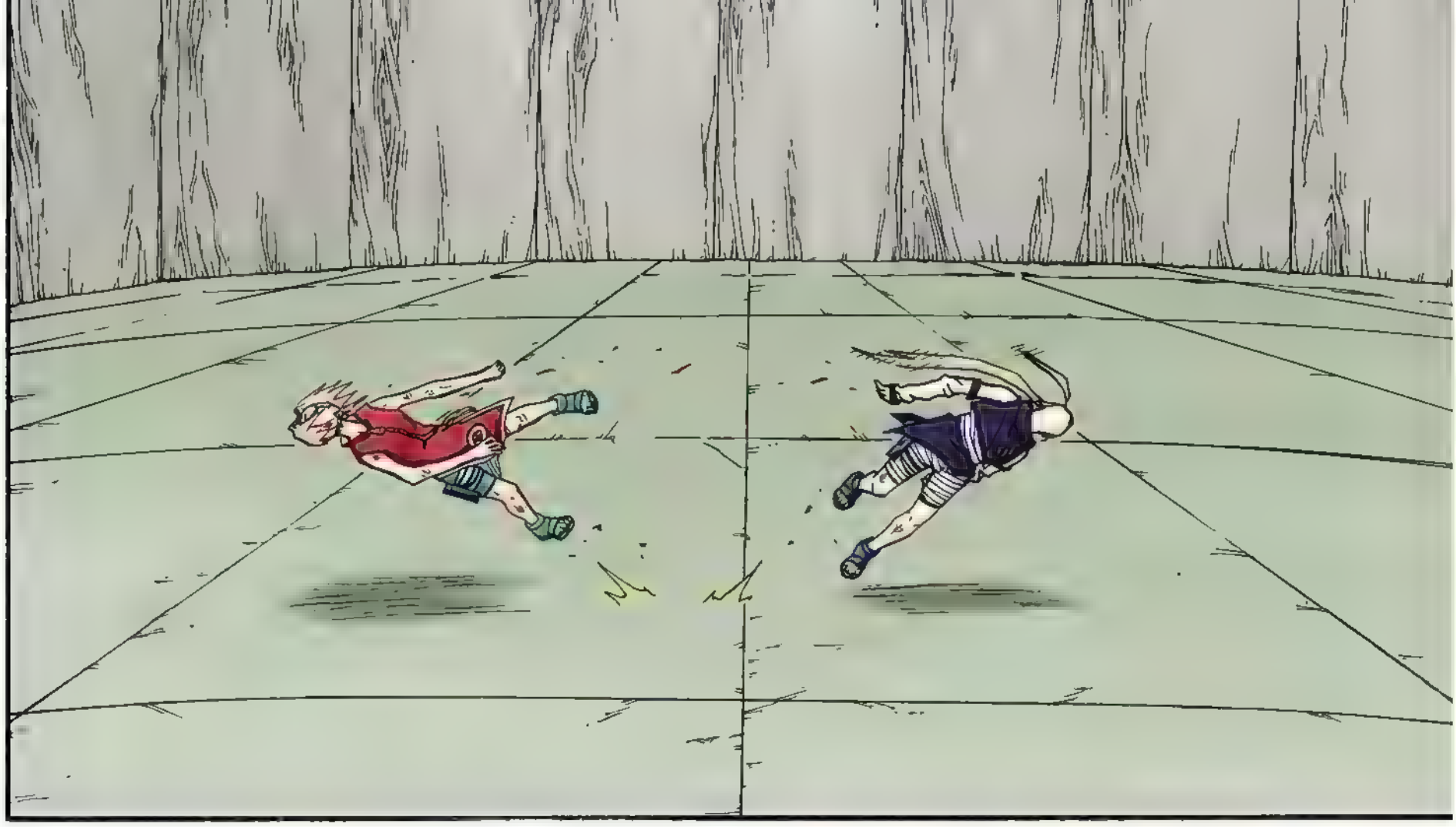

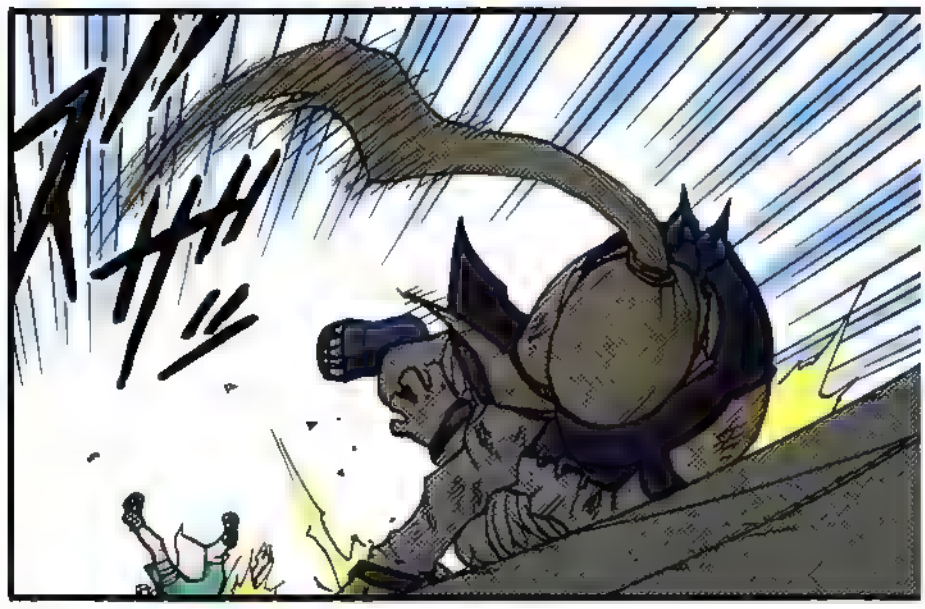

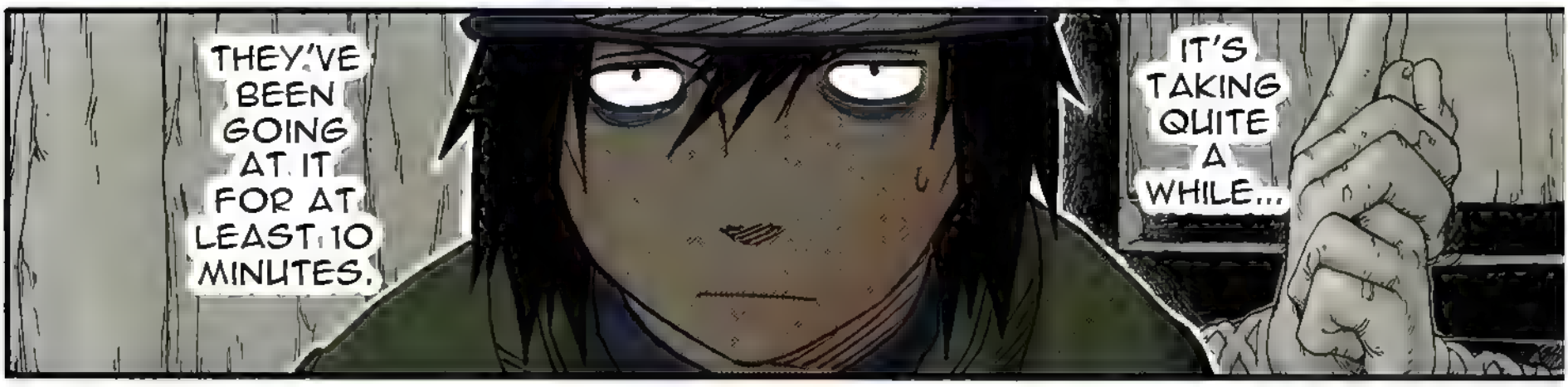

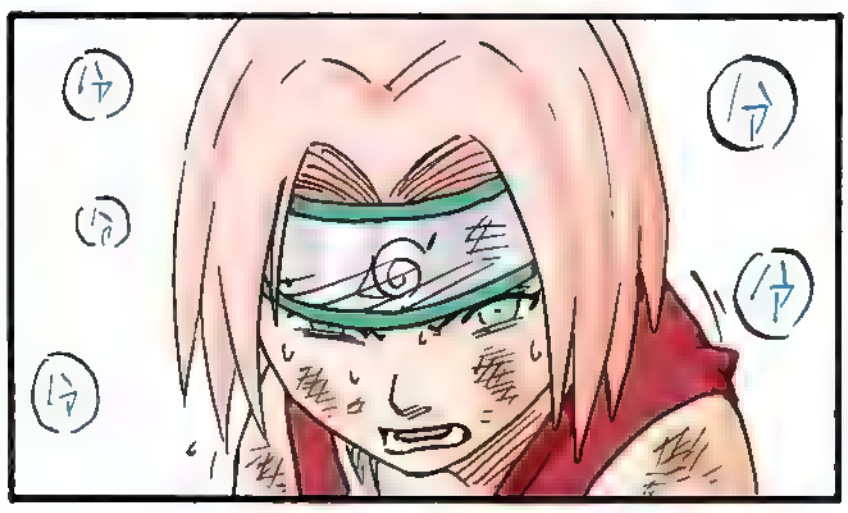

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YOU'RE RIGHT. THE MAGNITUDE OF YOUR OBSESSION WITH YOUR LONG, FLOWING HAIR AND SUPERFICIAL APPEARANCES IS PEERLESS...

I'M JUST NO MATCH FOR YOU!

HMPH ...

YOU CAN'T BE MY EQUAL!

IT'S UNTHINKABLE!!

YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR!

スッ

MAKING FUN OF ME?!

ピク

!

I DON'T LIKE SEEING INO THIS WAY!

SHE'S FALLING RIGHT INTO SAKURA'S TRAP.

INO'S AN IDIOT, LETTING SAKURA'S WORDS GET TO HER LIKE

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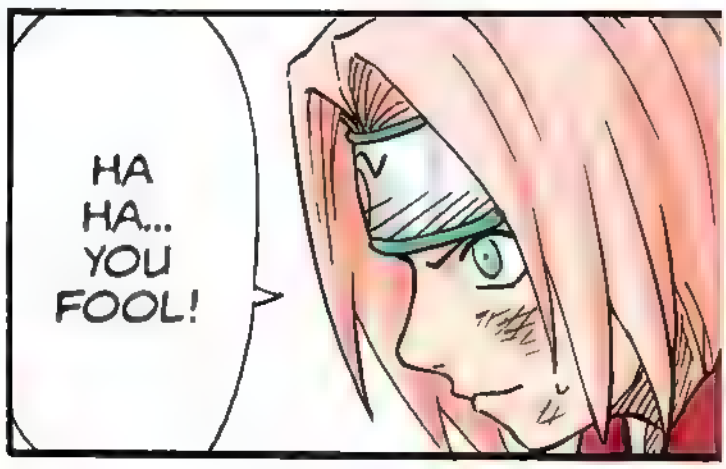
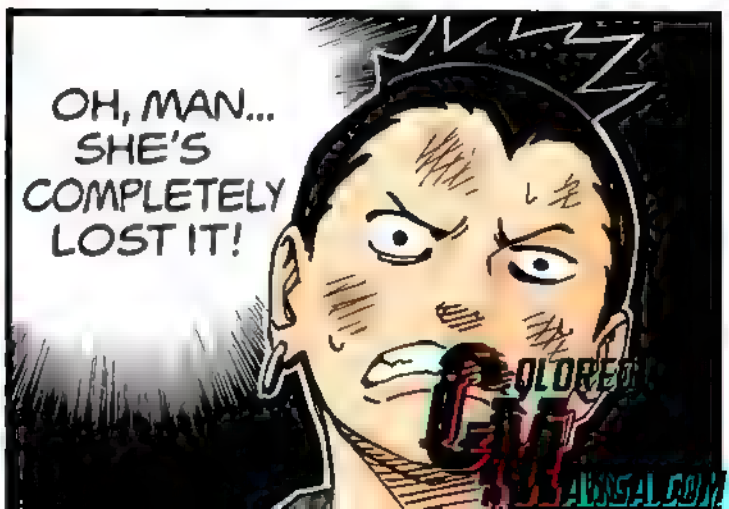
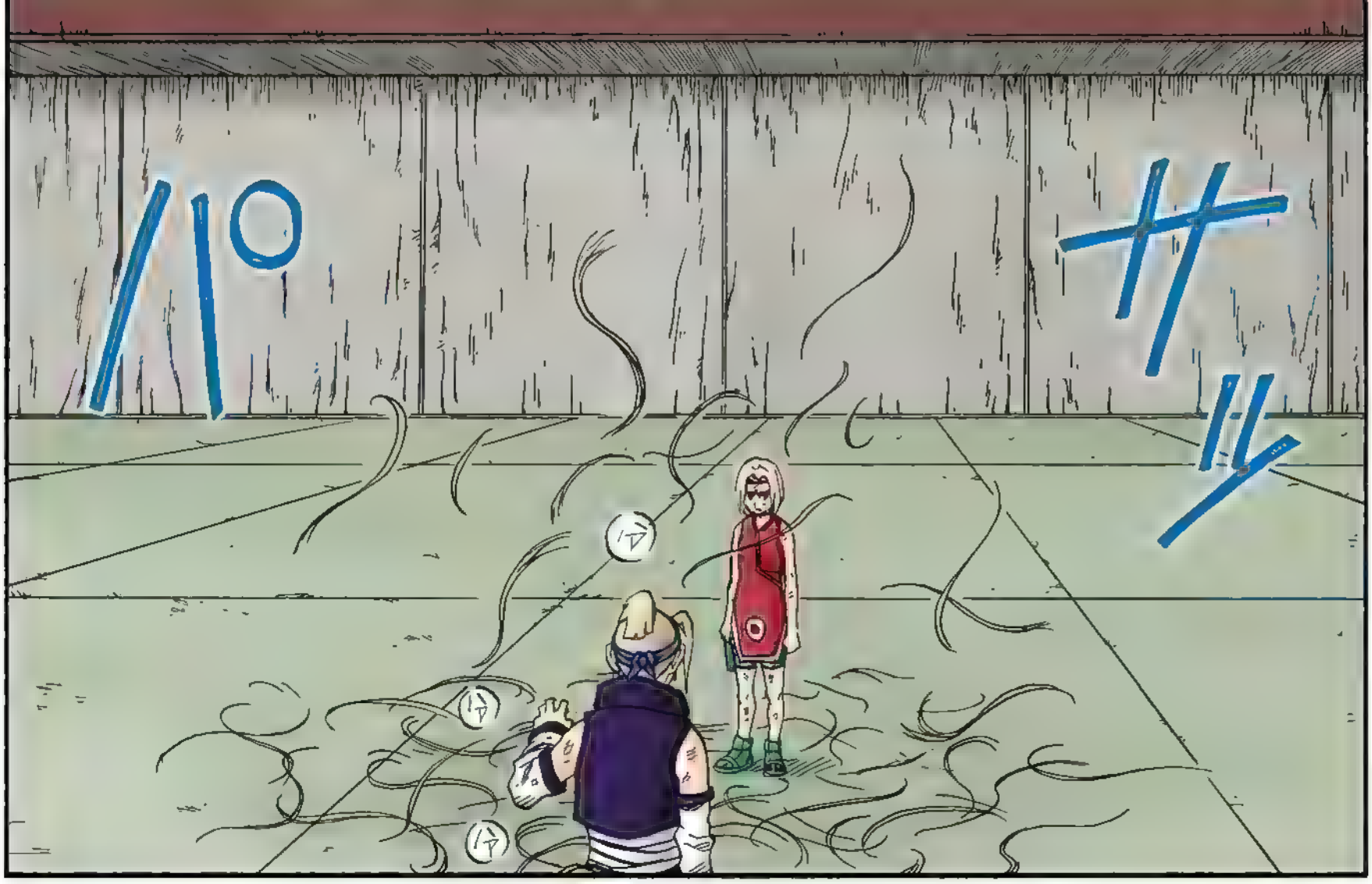
HA
HA

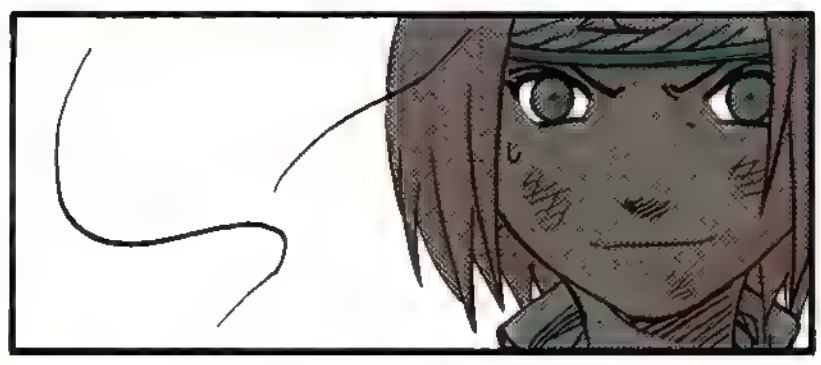
THIS
IS
NOTHING!!

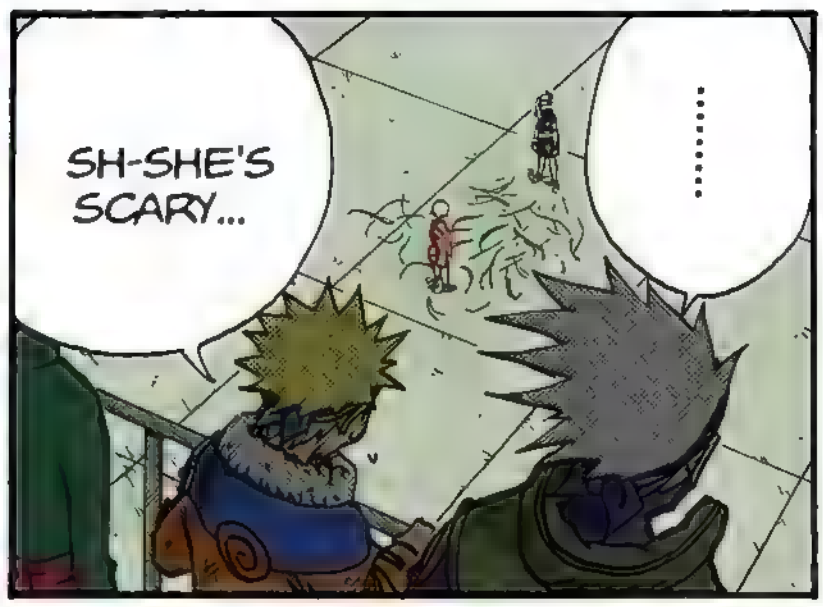
YAAAGH!!

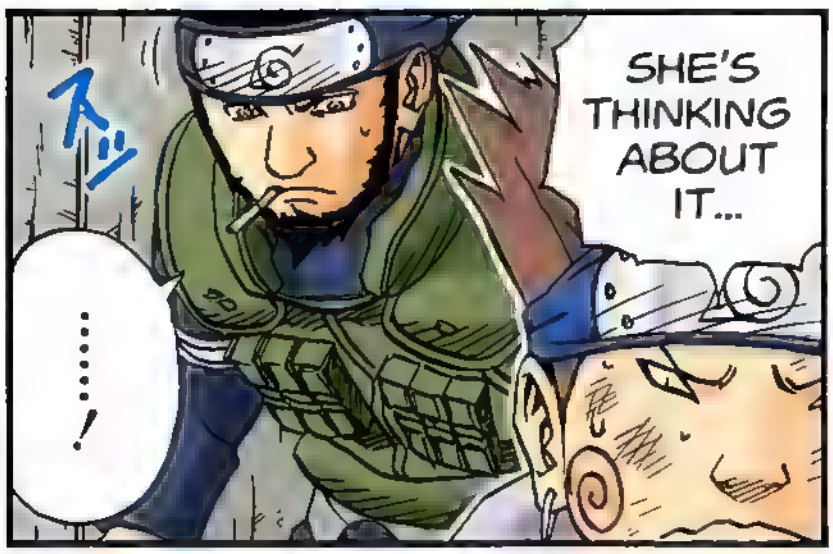

HA
HA...
YOU
FOOL!

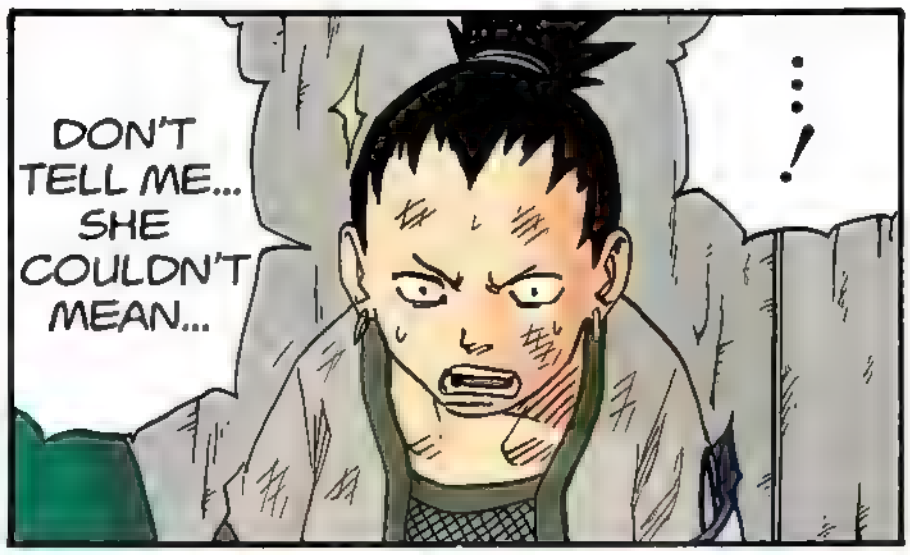

OH, MAN...
SHE'S
COMPLETELY
LOST IT!











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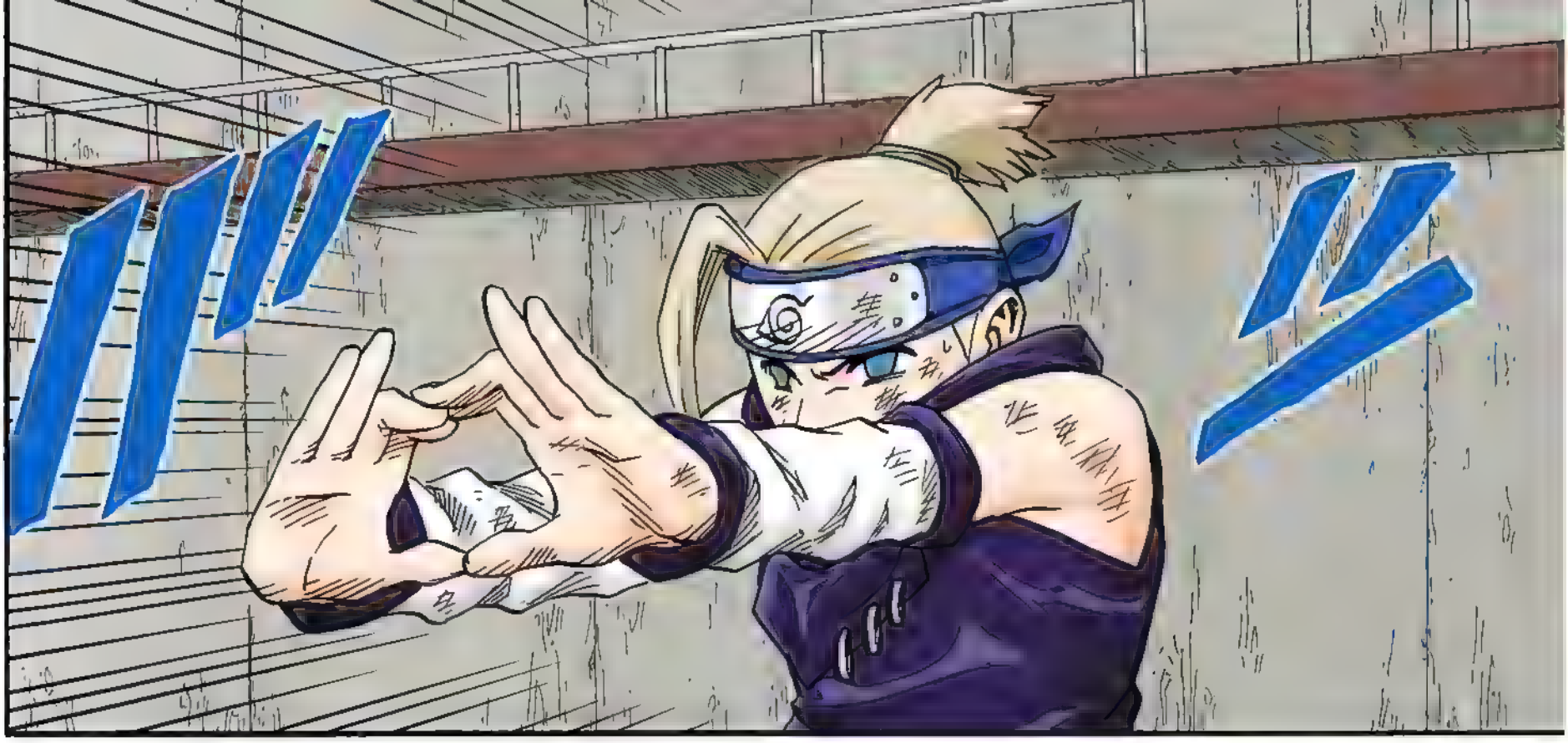
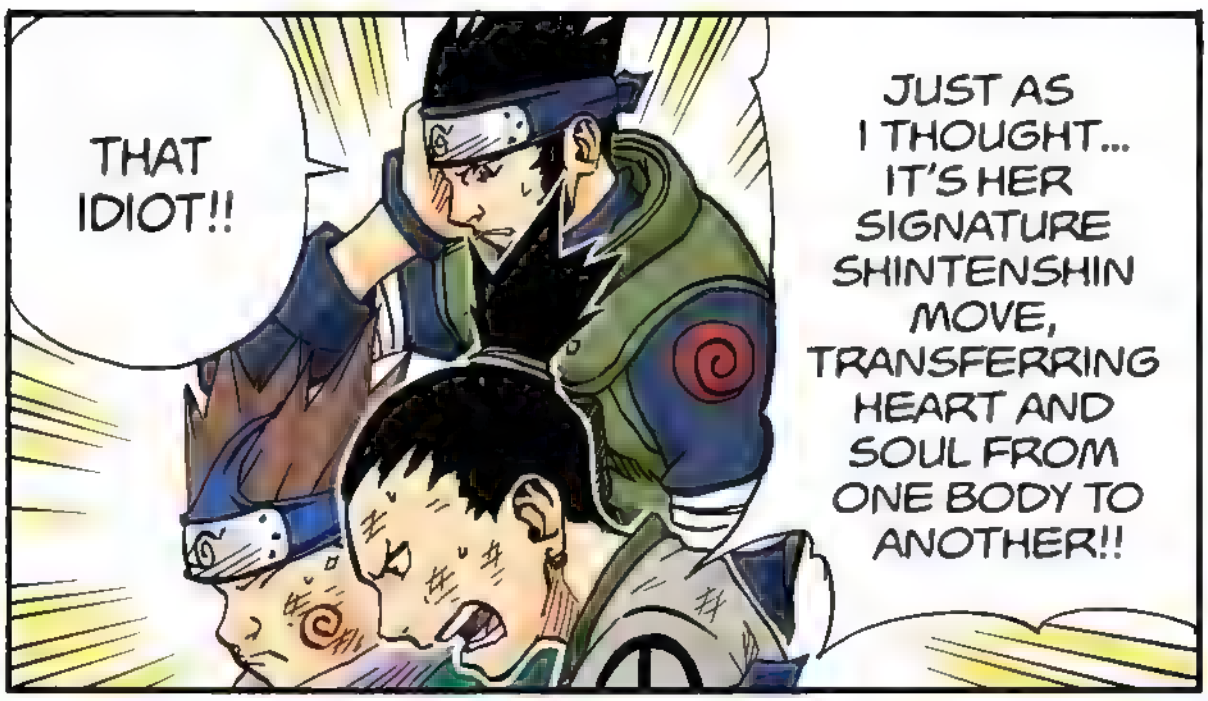
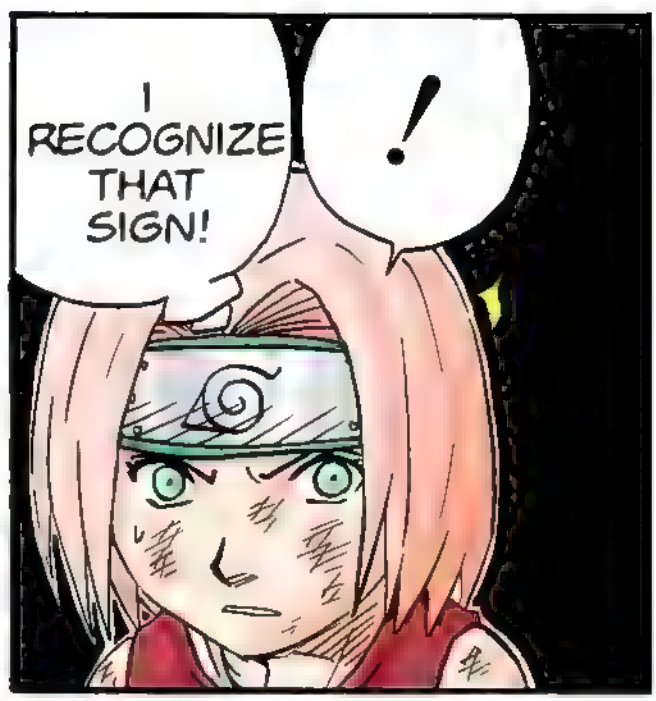
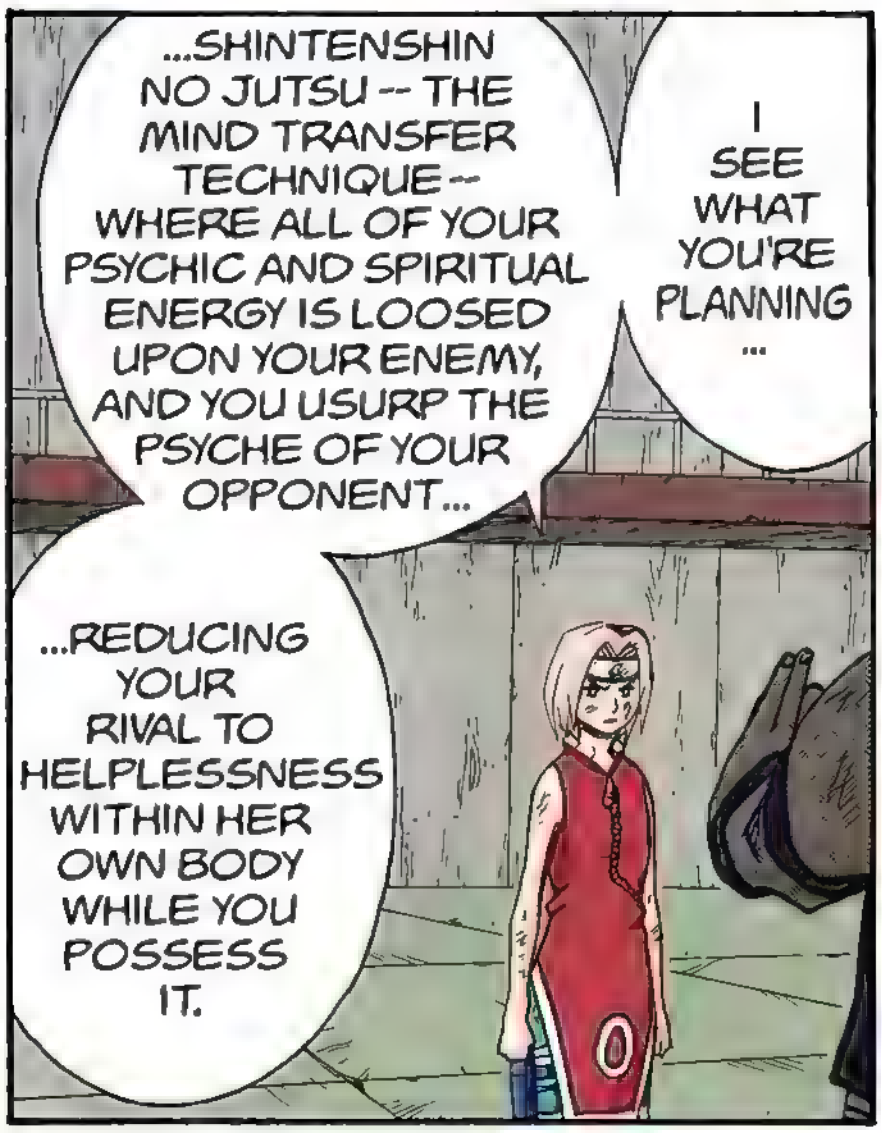
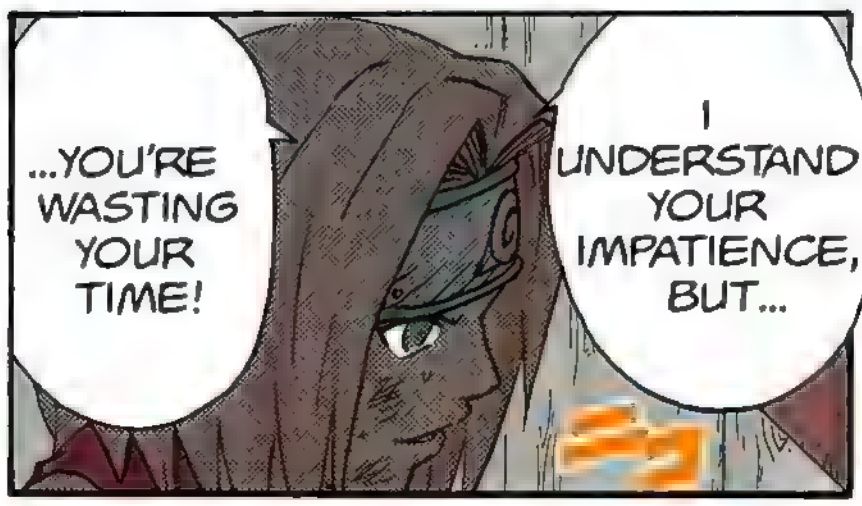
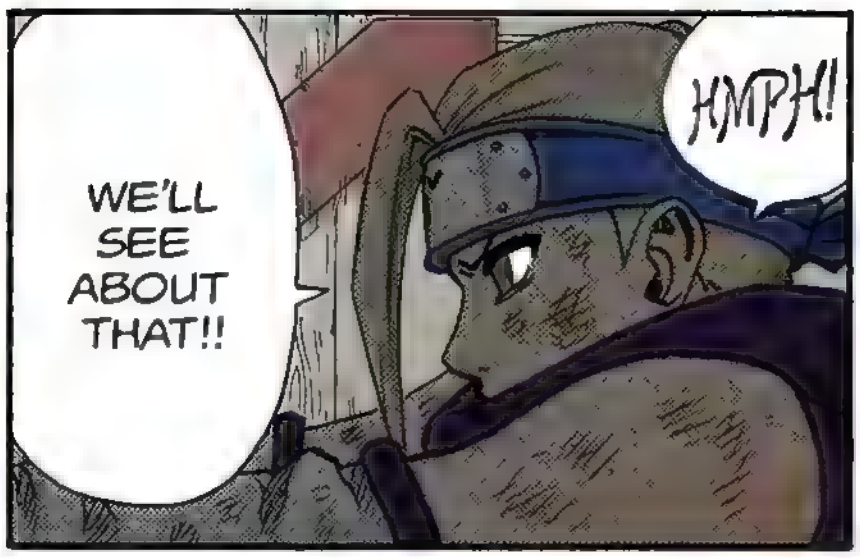







...SHINTENSHIN NO JUTSU -- THE MIND TRANSFER TECHNIQUE -- WHERE ALL OF YOUR PSYCHIC AND SPIRITUAL ENERGY IS LOOSED UPON YOUR ENEMY, AND YOU USURP THE PSYCHE OF YOUR OPPONENT...
I SEE WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING ...
...REDUCING YOUR RIVAL TO HELPLESSNESS WITHIN HER OWN BODY WHILE YOU POSSESS IT.





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SECONDLY, EVEN IF THAT PACKET OF MENTAL ENERGY SHOULD MISS ITS TARGET...

...IT IS STILL UNABLE TO RETURN TO THE ATTACKER'S BODY FOR SEVERAL MINUTES...

BUT THAT FORMIDABLE ART HAS A FEW INHERENT FLAWS. FIRST OF ALL...

...THAT BOLT OF MENTAL ENERGY CAN ONLY MOVE ALONG A DIRECT PATH...

...AND IT MOVES VERY SLOWLY.

...VULNERABLE AS A RAG DOLL.

AND DURING THAT TIME, YOUR OWN BODY REMAINS LIMP, HELPLESS...

AND IF INO TRIES HER ART AND FAILS, SAKURA WILL BE ABLE TO PUNISH INO'S DEFENSELESS BODY UNTIL INO'S SPIRIT IS ABLE TO RETURN.

SAKURA'S IN NO DANGER AS LONG AS SHE PRESENTS A MOVING TARGET.

IF IT COMES TO THAT, HAYATE WILL HAVE TO STOP THE MATCH.

THE SHINTENSHIN [redacted] IS AN UNPARALLELED TOOL FOR ESPIONAGE AND INFILTRATION, BUT...

...USING IT IN A HEADS-UP FIGHT IS SUICIDE.

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NO ONE KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN HERE UNTIL I GIVE IT A TRY!

WHAT OF IT?!

SHE'S NEVER SUPPOSED TO USE IT UNTIL I FREEZE THEM FIRST WITH MY "ME-AND-MY-SHADOW" TECHNIQUE... THIS IS ABSURD!

IN A COMBAT SITUATION, INO'S ART IS ONLY EVER SUPPOSED TO BE USED IN CONCERT WITH HER TEAM-MATES.

YOU KNOW IT AS WELL AS I DO.

YOU'LL ONLY GET ONE CHANCE. IF YOU MISS, IT'S OVER.

ﾃﾘ

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SHE'S NOT EVEN GOING TO HIT HER MARK!

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NO, YOU FOOL--!!

!!

!

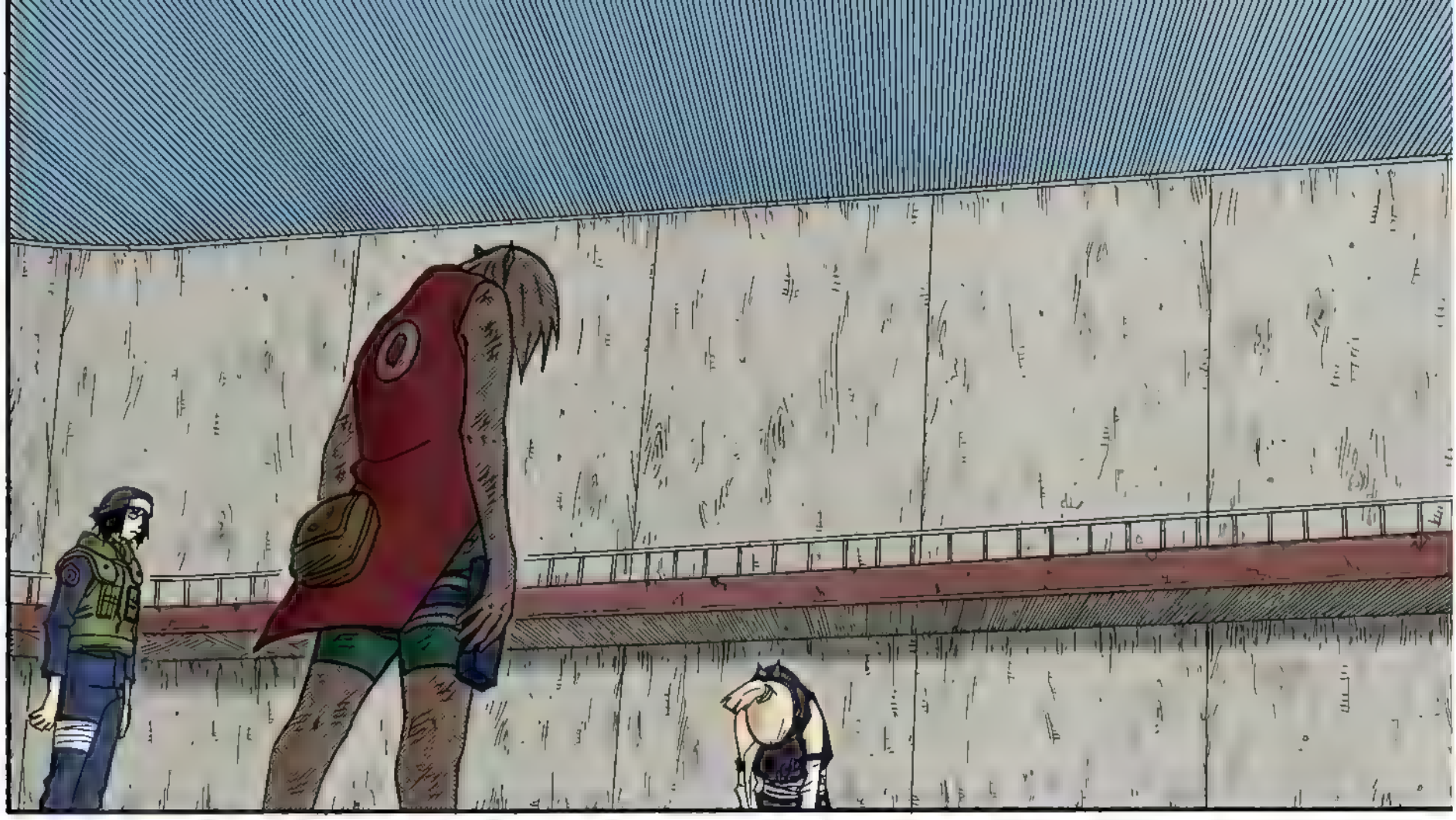
!?

!

SHIN-TEN-SHIN NO JUTSU !!

NINJA ART ...

COLORED NARUTO MANGA.COM



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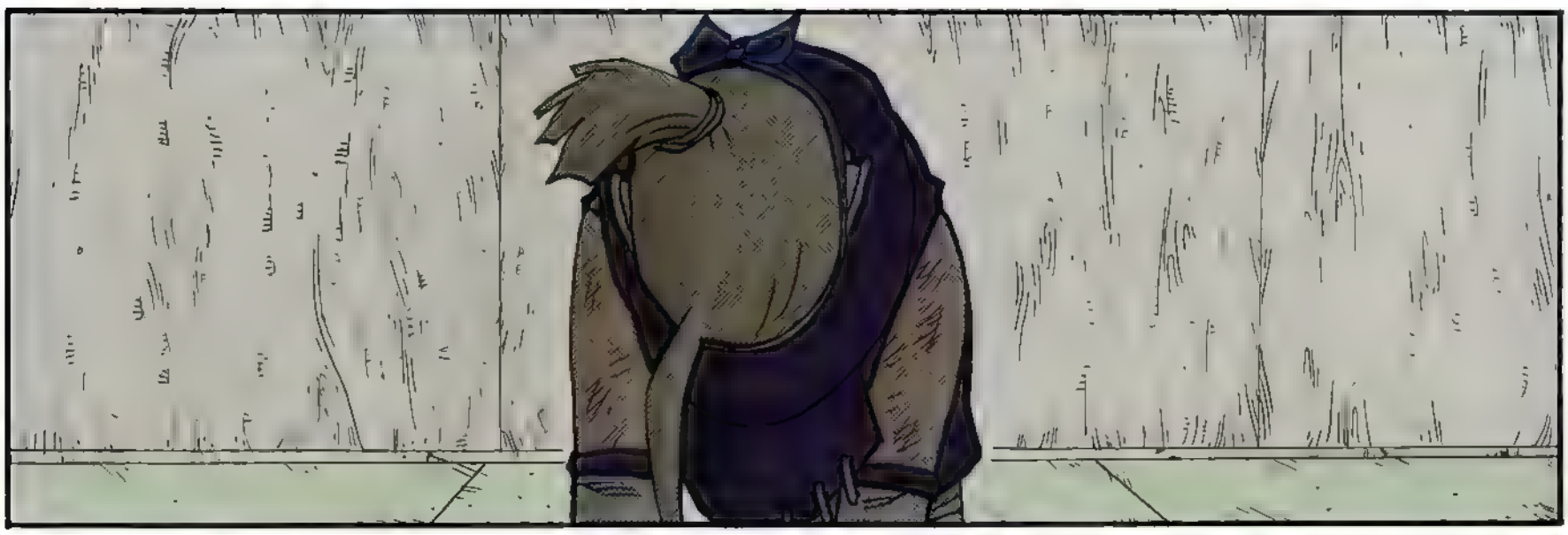
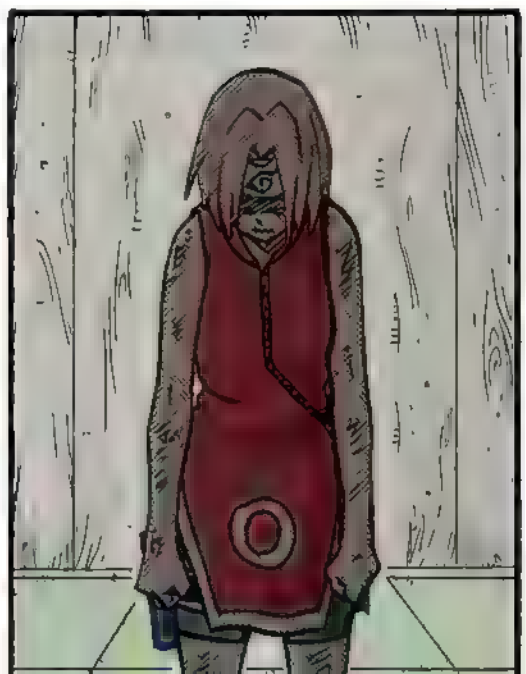
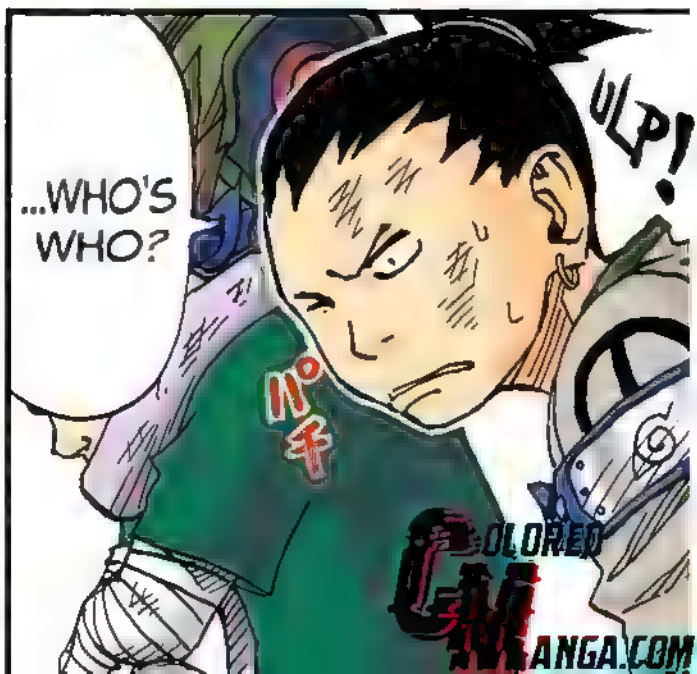


HEH
YOU LOSE...




ULP!
...WHO'S WHO?
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ANGA.COM

...INO!

GUESS YOU'RE DONE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE ACTUALLY TRIED IT.

I GUESS IT'S ALL OVER NOW...

.....

GOTCHA, SAKURA!

!

TH-THIS IS--!

!!

HUNH?

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HEH...

I SET A TRAP... AND YOU FELL FOR IT. ♡

...YOU DON'T MEAN--!

I MADE A LIVING ROPE BY RUNNING CHAKRA THROUGH MY OWN CUT HAIR.

CAN'T MOVE AT ALL, CAN YOU?

AH...!

YOU ZIGGED, YOU ZAGGED... AND YOU FELL RIGHT INTO IT!

YEP. THE HAND SIGNS I MADE EARLIER WERE JUST A DISTRACTION... TO KEEP YOU FROM SEEING THE REAL TRAP.

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AND NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU WHERE I WANT YOU...

...I CAN TAKE UP OCCUPANCY... AND MAKE YOU SURRENDER.

I THINK THE ODDS ARE 100% I'M GONNA HIT MY TARGET, DON'T YOU THINK?

THAT NUT... MAKING HERSELF LOOK LIKE A LOSER SO SHE COULD WIN!

LOOKS LIKE IT!

AND SO...

I CAN'T MOVE...!

UNH...

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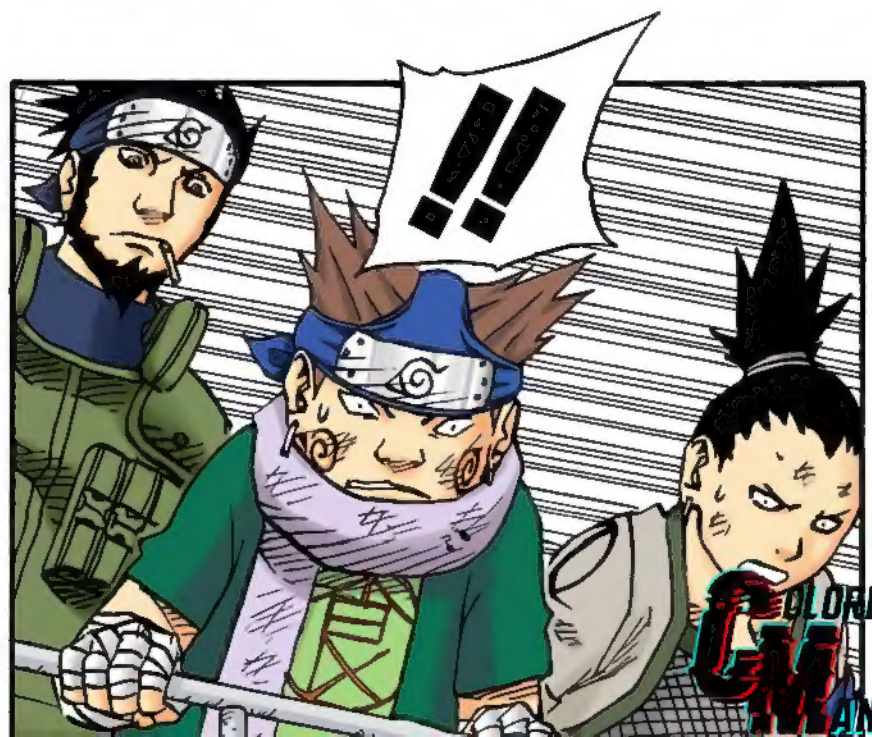

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...SAKURA!

HEH...

TOO BAD...

OH--!

SAKURA...

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